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Native American Demographic and Tribal Survival into the Twenty-first Century

Russell Thornton

The indigenous tribal populations of North America north of the Rio Grande River—referred to generically here as “Native Americans,” a term encompassing American Indians, Inuit (Eskimo), and Aleutian Islanders—declined drastically following European colonization. How drastic the decline was is debated since estimates of aboriginal population size for the area vary widely. The classic estimate of aboriginal population size for this area is James Mooney’s 1,152,000 million for North America north of the Rio Grande River at first (extensive) European contact (see Mooney 1928). Subsequent scholars generally accepted Mooney’s estimate until 1966, when Henry Dobyns (1966) asserted an aboriginal population size for North America north of Mexico of between 9.8 and 12.25 million; in 1983, he increased his asserted size to 18 million (north of Mesoamerica) (see Dobyns 1983).

Scholars now agree that Mooney’s population estimate significantly underestimated aboriginal population size for the area north of the Rio Grande River. Most scholars also consider Dobyns’s estimates to be excessive, although little consensus for a higher population figure exists. Estimates vary from around 2 million by Douglas Ubelaker (1988) to almost 4 million (reduced from an earlier estimate of almost 4.5 million) by William M. Denevan (1992 [1976], xvii-xxix) to the slightly more than 7 million estimate I arrived at and continue to use (see Thornton and Marsh-Thornton 1981, 47-53; Thornton 1987, 25-32).¹ My

estimate includes somewhat more than 5 million people for the conterminous United States area and somewhat more than 2 million for present-day Canada, Alaska, and Greenland combined. (See Daniel 1992, for a recent, thorough consideration of North American estimates.)

Whatever the aboriginal population size, substantial depopulation occurred after Europeans commenced their conquest of North America, although the pattern and extent of depopulation varied over time, from region to region and from tribe to tribe.² (And, the conquest was achieved in part because of the depopulation, one beginning early in the sixteenth century and continuing to the beginnings of the twentieth century.) Much Native American population decline resulted from European and African diseases introduced unintentionally into this hemisphere. As Merbs concludes: “the two worlds of disease were different enough so that the post-Columbian effects of Old World diseases on the Native Americans was [sic] devastating” (Merbs 1992, 36). New diseases which impacted native populations in the Western Hemisphere include smallpox, measles, the bubonic plague, cholera, typhoid, diphtheria, scarlet fever, various forms of influenza and whooping cough,³ malaria, and yellow fever as well as some venereal diseases.

Much decline also resulted from the many effects of colonialism, subtle or otherwise. As Larsen (1994, 110) summarizes, the emphasis on disease “has overshadowed a host of other important consequences of contact such as population relocation, forced labor, dietary change, and other areas.” Colonialism also interacted with disease to produce population decline. In this regard, Meister (1976, 165) notes that “later population decline resulting from disease was made possible because Indians had been driven from their land and robbed of their other resources.” Native American societies were removed and relocated, warred upon and massacred, sterilized, and undermined ecologically and economically. All of these caused population decline due to fertility decreases as well as mortality increases, as I have discussed (see Thornton 1987; Thornton 2004).

The Native American population of the United States, Canada, and Greenland combined reached a nadir population of perhaps only 375,000 at around 1900 (Thornton 1987, 42-43), although it may have been somewhat higher but certainly no more than .5 million (see Ubelaker 1988, for a higher nadir figure than I use). There was an actual, overall demographic collapse (that varied from region to region, from century to century); that is, a sudden, drastic reduction so that a population is unable to reproduce itself. Along the way, the collapse resulted in the dissolution of many of the hundreds of Native American tribes of North America, the reconfiguration of many others, and even the actual creation of still others. The picture of Native American tribes today is different from that of Native American tribes circa 1492.

Recovery of Native North America

Following almost four centuries of overall population decline, the Native American population north of Mexico began to increase, beginning in the early twentieth century. It has continued since (see Thornton 1987, 159-160). The U.S. Census decennial enumerations indicate a Native American population growth for the United States that has been nearly continuous since 1900—except for an influenza epidemic in 1918 that caused serious losses and some changes in enumeration procedures (mentioned below) whereby individuals were classified as Native American—to 1.4 million by 1980 and to 1.9 million by 1990 to 2.5 million by 2000 plus 1.6 million self-reported “racially-mixed” Native Americans.⁴ To this can be added .98 million Native Americans in Canada—in the 2001 Census there were 609,000 American Indians, 45,000 Inuit (Eskimos), and 292,000 Métis—and a small Native American population in Greenland.⁵ The total then becomes around 3.5 million in North America north of Mexico; or, around 5 million if racially-mixed Native Americans in the 2000 U.S. Census are included and around 5.5 million if an additional 345,000 Canadians with some aboriginal ancestry are added (see U.S. Bureau of the Census website at www.census.gov; Statistics Canada website at www.statcan.ca).

This 3.5 or 5.5 million Native American population in the United States and Canada is a significant increase from the perhaps fewer than 400,000 around the turn of the century, about 250,000 of which were in the United States; however, the population is significantly less than the estimated more than 7 million circa 1492. It is far, far less than the present-day total of some 308 million non-Native Americans of the area—some 279 million in the United States, according to the 2000 Census; some 29 million in Canada, according to the 2001 Census. Thus, Native Americans represent only some 1.1 to 1.8 percent of the population.

This population recovery was in part a result of lower mortality rates and increases in life expectancy as the effects of “Old World” disease and associated colonialism lessened. As Snipp has noted, the mortality differences between whites and Native Americans have narrowed in recent decades. However, “the American Indian population still experiences substantially higher mortality than other Americans, notably the white population” (Snipp 1996, 30). The population recovery also resulted from changing fertility patterns and adaptation through intermarriage with non-native peoples during this century, whereby American Indian birth rates in both rural and urban areas have remained higher than those of the average North American population (Thornton, Sandefur and Snipp 1991; Snipp 1996, 24-28).

Early in the twentieth century, at around the point of the Native American population nadir in the United States, the fecundity and low fertility of Native Americans—particularly those of the so-called “full bloods”—was of considerable concern to government officials as they foresaw Native Americans eventually disappearing, particularly the “full-blooded” Native Americans. Soon,

however, fertility increased. Indeed, the twentieth-century recovery of the Native American population of the United States has been driven by Native American fertility increases and Native American fertility levels higher than the total United States population. In 1980, for example, married American Indian women 35 to 44 years of age had a mean number of children ever born of 3.61 in comparison to 2.77 for the total U.S. population and only 2.67 for the white segment of the population (Thornton, Sandefur and Snipp 1991, 390). Intermarried American Indian women generally had lower fertility rates in 1980 than American Indian women married to American Indian men; however, intermarried, American Indian women still had higher fertility than the total U.S. population.

Today, Native American fertility remains high. Snipp notes that “American Indian fertility equals or exceeds the fertility of either black or white women” (Snipp 1996, 25) in both rural and urban areas. He observes that “a key to explaining the high rates of American Indian fertility is that American Indian women begin their childbearing at a relatively early age. Women who begin childbearing at an early age typically have more children than those who defer motherhood until they are older” (Snipp 1996, 24-25).

Definitions of Native American

The very nature of this population history and recovery has had and continues to have profound effects upon the Native American population, particularly who Native Americans are and how they define themselves, racially, tribally, and individually.

In 1892, the report of the U.S. Commissioner of Indian Affairs (1892, 31-37) sought to address the question: “*What* is an Indian?” “Indians” were defined as those who lived in tribal relations with other Indians. Among other things, this reflected definitions incorporated in nineteenth-century treaties between Indian tribes and the federal government, extending tribal benefits to “mixed-blood” relatives living among the tribe but not to those living elsewhere. Recently and far more appropriately, the U.S. Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) website contains a discussion of “*Who* is an Indian?” As it says, “No single Federal or tribal criterion establishes a person’s identity as an Indian.” One criterion, however, is being recognized as Indian by members of the local (Indian) community.

The twentieth-century increase in the Native American population reflected in successive censuses of the United States was due in part to changes in the identification of individuals as “Native American.” The U.S. Census has in the past typically enumerated individuals as of only one race. Since 1960 the U.S. Census has relied on self-identification to ascertain an individual’s race; prior to that it generally relied on simply the observations of the enumerator to identify individuals as Native American or another race, with some especial efforts in the 1910 Census and the 1930 Census to classify mixed-blood Native Americans as “Native American” (see Thornton 1987, 212-222). Much of the increase

in the American Indian population—excluding Inuit (Eskimo) and Aleuts—from 523,591 in 1960 to 792,730 in 1970 to 1.37 million in 1980 to 1.9 million in 1990 resulted from individuals not identifying as American Indian in an earlier census but identifying as such in a later census (see Passel 1976; Passel and Berman 1985; Passel and Berman 1986; Eschbach 1993; Harris 1994; see also Nagel 1996). It is estimated that about 25 percent of the population “growth” of American Indians from 1960 to 1970, about 60 percent of the “growth” from 1970 to 1980, and about 35 percent of the “growth” from 1980 to 1990 may be accounted for by these changing identifications (see Thornton 2000, 32). Generally, the observed increase reflects changes in self-identification from “white” to “American Indian” of individuals affiliated loosely, if at all, with actual Native American tribes.

The 2000 U.S. Census was the first in which the population could identify itself as having more than one race—some 6.8 million people did so, about 2.4 percent of the total population. In that census, 2.5 million people identified themselves as Native American and another 1.6 million identified themselves as Native American and another race, generally white. Thus, some 37 percent of those with a Native American identification were self-identified as “racially mixed.” This far exceeds the percentages for other groups: for example, only about 5 percent of African Americans indicated mixed ancestry, although there is considerably more mixed ancestry in that population (U.S. Department of Commerce 2001). Seemingly, this allowed individuals formerly indicating they were “white” to now indicate they were both “white” and “Native American” thereby increasing the numbers of “Native American,” something Native Americans have launched public campaigns about, through, for example, U.S. Census posters urging people with only partial Native American ancestry to identify as “Native American.” Conversely, reporting “white” and another race for African Americans would reduce the numbers of reported African Americans. And, too, most mixed people of African American and other “race” are defined by society solely as African American, unlike the case with Native Americans whereby “mixed” individuals can be accepted as Native American.

The 1996 Census of Canada also used a new question to identify Native Americans. Whereas earlier censuses asked about ethnic origin or ancestry, the 1996 Census asked if the person was “Aboriginal.” It also asked if the person had Aboriginal ancestry. Some 1.1 million people reported an Aboriginal ancestry, as opposed to the .8 million identifying as Aboriginal. In the 2001 Census of Canada, some 1.4 million people reported an Aboriginal ancestry, as opposed to the .98 million identifying as Aboriginal (see Statistics Canada website).

Certainly, the Native American population could not have recovered to the extent it has without intermarriage (see, for example, Shoemaker 1999, 63-66, 87-97). However, it has created identity struggles for children of these intermarriages as they sought to define who they were and get others to accept it.

Children of Native American and African-American intermarriages had particular difficulty getting others to accept their *Indianness*, generally much more difficulty than those of Native American and white intermarriages.

Native American Tribalism

Accompanying this population increase has also been a *pan-Indianism* of “Indianness” in and of itself. By this is meant an identification of Native Americans as Native American or “Indian” not as members of separate Native American tribes. Among the earliest of those who articulated this concept was the pioneering Native American scholar Robert Thomas, writing in the special issue of the *Midcontinent American Studies Journal* on “The Indian Today” (see Thomas 1965). This *pan-Indianism* is distinct from the *pan-tribalism*; that is, an identification of tribes with one another while still maintaining distinct tribal identities. The roots of *pan-tribalism* extend perhaps back to the time of the Shawnee prophets Tecumseh and Tenkwatwa as they attempted revitalization across tribal lines in the first half of the nineteenth century (see Edmonds 1983), something not really occurring until the great Ghost Dances of 1870 and 1890 (see Mooney 1991 [1896]; Thornton 1986a) when many different tribes took up the new religion.

The roots of *pan-Indianism* perhaps extend far back in time. Yet, it was not solidified until the emergence of the American Indian intelligentsia of the early twentieth century, in part a result of the changing nature of the Native American population and the aftermath of allotment and the lessening of importance if not actual demise of many American Indian tribal entities (see, for example, Nagel 1996). At this time, Native American leaders began to articulate common concerns—for example, U.S. citizenship—of all Native Americans, not just concerns of members of particular tribes about issues affecting them solely.⁶

Many separate criteria may be used to delimit the Native American population. Language, residence, cultural affiliation, recognition by a community, degree of “blood,” genealogical lines of descent, and self-identification have all been used at some point in the past to define both the total Native American population and specific tribal populations. Each measure produces a different population, and which variables are ultimately employed to define a population is an arbitrary decision; however, the implications for Native Americans can be enormous.

Native Americans are unique among ethnic and racial groups in the United States in their formal tribal affiliations and in their individual and tribal relationships with the U.S. government; this is one way to define the population. Many, but not all, individuals who *can* be considered as Native Americans are *formal* Native Americans; that is, Native Americans who are enrolled members of Native American entities recognized by the U.S. government “for the purposes of having a relationship.” Today, there are 562 American Indian groups in the United States that are legally recognized by the federal government and

receive services from the BIA. These encompass 337 American Indian tribes and 225 Alaska Native groups,⁷ and a total population of around 1.7 million (see U.S. Department of the Interior 1999).

The formal enrollment of individuals in a Native American tribe has historical roots that extend back to the early nineteenth century. As the U.S. government dispossessed native peoples, treaties established specific rights, privileges, goods, and money to which those party to a treaty—both tribes as entities and individual tribal members—were entitled. The practices of creating formal censuses and keeping lists of names of tribal members evolved to insure an accurate and equitable distribution of benefits. Over time, Native Americans themselves established more formal tribal governments, including constitutions, and began to regulate their membership more carefully, especially in regard to land allotments, royalties from the sale of resources, distributions of tribal funds, and voting. In the twentieth century, the U.S. government established further criteria to determine eligibility for benefits such as educational aid and health care.

The some 1.7 million Native Americans who are enrolled members of one of the 562 federally recognized tribes and villages must meet various criteria for tribal membership, which vary from tribe to tribe and are typically set forth in tribal constitutions approved by the BIA. Upon membership, individuals are typically issued tribal enrollment (or registration) numbers and cards that identify their special status as members of a particular American Indian tribe. To be enrolled individuals must first receive a Certificate of Degree of Indian Blood (referred to as a CDIB) from the BIA specifying a certain degree of Indian blood, e.g., a blood quantum. Each tribe has a particular set of requirements—generally requiring a minimum degree of Indian blood and/or lineal descent from a tribal member—for membership (enrollment) of individuals in the tribe. Typically, a blood quantum is established by tracing ancestry back through time to a relative or relatives on earlier tribal rolls or censuses where the relative's proportion of Native American blood was recorded. In such historic instances, more often than not it was simply self-indicated. Minimal blood quantum requirements for membership in a tribe or village vary widely: most require a one-fourth minimal amount of Native American blood; around two dozen require more than one-fourth; several require less than one-fourth; and somewhat more than 100 tribes do not specify a minimal requirement, only that one must have a documented tribal blood quantum (see Thornton 1997).⁸

Thus, Native American tribal populations are defined tribally by the tribe itself and racially by the U.S. government whereby the BIA issues cards certifying a Native American tribal blood quantum.

Implications of Population Recovery

The nature of the population recovery of Native Americans has produced distinctive Native American population segments, ones distinguished along both

racial and tribal lines. Racial heterogeneity has been produced through intermarriage and government documentation, whereby many individuals with few “Native American genes” are within the Native American population, defined either tribally or by self-reporting in the U.S. Census (or by most other methods). Tribal heterogeneity has been produced through different membership requirements of tribes and whether Native American individuals are actually formal tribal members. A dichotomy exists between Native Americans as only Native American and tribal Native Americans; that is, between Native Americans not enrolled in tribes and Native Americans enrolled in tribes.

Table 1 lists percentages of enumerated Native Americans in recent U.S. censuses actually enrolled in federally recognized tribes. As it indicates, only certain percentages of those indicating American Indian race in the censuses are actually formal tribal members. (As the Table indicates, a dramatic decrease in the percentage being tribal members occurred following the change to self-definition to indicate race.) Thus, of the 2.5 million indicating Native American race only in the 2000 Census, some 68.6 percent were actual members of federally recognized tribes; of the 4.1 million indicating Native American and another race, some 41.2 percent were actual members of federally recognized tribes.

These differences varied by tribe. For example, there were 241,054 people enrolled in the Navajo Nation circa 2000 and 220,710 enrolled Cherokees circa 2000—200,628 enrolled in the Cherokee Nation, 12,139 enrolled in the Eastern Band of Cherokee, and 7,953 enrolled in the United Keetoowah Band of Cherokee—and the 2000 U.S. Census enumerated 298,197 people of some Navajo ancestry and 729,533 people of some Cherokee ancestry (see U.S. Department of Commerce 2001; U.S. Department of the Interior 1999). Therefore, 80.8 percent of people identifying as Navajo were enrolled whereas only 30.3 percent of people identifying as Cherokee were enrolled.

The Canadian census enumeration of Aboriginals refers to people identifying as North American Indian, Inuit (Eskimo), and/or Métis (a special group of individuals of Indian and white ancestry). Aside from census purposes, one must be registered under the 1876 Indian Act of Canada (officially known as “An Act Respecting Indians”) to be “officially Indian.” There are two primary categories of Canadian Indians: (1) registered (status) Indians, i.e., those registered under the Act; and (2) non-registered (non-status) Indians, i.e., those who were either never registered under the Act or who gave up their registration (and became “enfranchised,” as they say), as when a registered (status) woman married a non-registered (non-status) or non-native man. Registered Indians are further divided into treaty and non-treaty Indians, depending on whether their group ever had a treaty relationship with the Canadian government (see Thornton 2000; Thornton 2004). In the 2001 Canadian census, 558,000 individuals were “Registered Indian” and 418,000 individuals were “Not a Registered Indian” out of the total of 976,000 individuals identifying as of “Aboriginal identity” (see Statistics Canada website).

Table 1: Comparisons of Native American Tribal Enrollments and U.S. Census Enumerations, 1950 to 2000

Year	U.S. Tribal Enrollments	U.S. Census Enumeration	“Percent Enrolled”	Percent in U.S. Census Not Listing a Tribal Affiliation
1950		357,499	“112.75”*	
1952	403,071			
1960		523,591		
1970		792,730		21.2
1980		1,366,676	65.21	
1981	891,208			
1985	950,055**			
1990		1,937,391		11.6
1999	1,698,483			
2000				
NA		2,475,956	68.60	20.9
NA+		1,643,345		33.3
NA & NA+		4,119,301	41.23	25.9

*This undoubtedly reflects a U.S. census undercount as well as the two-years difference in time.

**Excludes Alaska.

NA = Native American “race” only

NA+ = Native American “race” and other “race(s)”

Sources: Thornton 1987: 160, Table 7-1; Ubelaker 1988: 292, 293, Table 293; U.S. Department of the Interior 1999: i; U.S. Department of Commerce, U.S. Census Bureau 2001: 8, Table 6.

Was it Genocide?

People debate—still today—whether the decimation of the Native American population of North America could be called “*genocide*,” a genocide resulting from U.S. government policy.

The Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide adopted by Resolution 260 (III) A of the United Nations General Assembly

on 9 December 1948 (see its website at www.hrweb.org; Robinson 1960; Legters 1988) defines genocide “whether committed in time of peace or in time of war” in its Article 2 as:

any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such: (a) Killing members of the group; (b) Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group; (c) Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part; (d) Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group; (e) Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group.

Thus genocide may be *physical* or *cultural* (and mental); and may be acts by “constitutionally responsible rulers, public officials, or private individuals.”

The history of Native Americans in the United States since Juan Ponce de Leon arrived in *la Florida* in 1513—or whoever arrived here first from Europe—is complicated and varied. *Physical genocide as policy* is probably not the best term to describe the four centuries of population decline from circa 1492 to circa 1900. Certainly much of the decline in the American Indian population occurred because of the pathogens brought to this hemisphere from Europe, Africa, or Asia, generally introduced unintentionally. This was not genocide. But has there been any period of human history where a group of people were subjected to four hundred years of population genocide? Physical genocide seems more characteristic of years and decades than of centuries.

If one seeks a single term to define the history following 1492, the most accurate is *colonialism*, defined as the deliberate imposition of one people’s way of life upon another people. It is this colonialism in the broader sense that produced Native American population decline for some four centuries and the lack of population recovery until the past century. As a facet of this European colonialism, however, *physical* genocide occurred at times and places, certainly by individuals, and by some participation of governments.

Much discussed in this regard are the early, virtual annihilations of the Pequots, the Delaware, and others in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Deaths occurred during the first half of the nineteenth century in forced removals of the Southeastern Indians—known as the *Trail of Tears*—because of measles, cholera, whooping cough, dysentery, and other diseases. However, the hardships of the journeys accentuated the mortality of these diseases while producing their own mortality. The removals were planned and determined (and illegal) efforts by the executive and legislative branches of the federal government to rid the Southeast of Indians irrespective of the demographic implications involved (see Thornton 1984; Thornton 1987, 114–118). And in Northern

California from about 1850 to about 1870 there occurred many episodes of planned destruction of tribes and villages by determined groups of vigilantes including the official California militia (see Thornton 1986b; Thornton 1987, 107-113).

The Plains Wars of the last half of the nineteenth century contained episodes of deliberate, systematic extermination of Indians not in accordance with the nature of war at that time, although some have dismissed them as such (see Lewy 2004). Wounded Knee has been called a “tragic accident of war” (see Lewy 2004, 61), though there was no formally declared war against the Lakota at that time and the massacre occurred after the Lakota had already surrendered. And, too, the Ghost Dance was a new religion (see Thornton 1986a). In a most fundamental sense, the capture of those massacred at Wounded Knee was religious oppression. Was it approved by the U.S. government? Some soldiers received medals of honor (see Mooney 1991 [1896])! (Recently, there have been attempts to get them rescinded.⁹) And, the Sand Creek massacre of 1864 occurred while the Cheyenne and Arapaho were flying a white flag indicating their surrender. They were massacred by the Colorado militia, formed by states and territories as part of the U.S. Civil War effort (see Thornton 1987, 105).

War was brutal in the mid- to late-nineteenth century, and many atrocities were committed in the U.S. Civil War. However, Indian wars seemed particularly brutal, surely more so than the Civil War: Despite the burning of Atlanta and a “scorched-earth policy” for the South during the U.S. Civil War, I doubt if Generals Sherman and Sheridan felt the same toward Southerners as they did toward American Indians; certainly, the latter never quipped “the only good Southerners I ever saw were dead,” as he did reportedly did regarding American Indians (see Ellis 1900 [1895], 1483; see also Hutton 1985, 180).

As a facet of colonialism, however, a *cultural* genocide using definitions of (c) and (e) above has been more determined and extensive than *physical* genocide. Ironically, the apex of *cultural* genocide probably occurred sometime during the very last decades of the nineteenth century or the first decades of the twentieth century—which is distinguished by the beginning of the demographic recovery of the American Indian population in its early years—although *cultural* genocide goes back centuries. Many events of the late nineteenth century and through the mid-twentieth century encompassing the formation of reservations, the allotment of reservation lands, forced attendance at boarding schools, relocation to urban areas, suppression of Indian languages, and prevention of the practice of religion all constitute attempted *cultural* genocide.¹⁰

It was not complete, however; Native Americans as both physical and cultural Native Americans survive into the twenty-first century.

Summary

North America had a large Native American population of some 7+ million at first contact with Europeans; it was spread among hundreds of separate tribes.

Disease and colonialism undermined this population, and a decimation occurred. Population recovery did occur. As numbers of Native Americans declined and Native Americans came into increased contact with whites, blacks, and others, Native American peoples increasingly married with non-Indians. Inter-marriage contributed very significantly to the recovery of the Native American population, and high fertility rates and decreased mortality rates were important. In Canada, different legal categories developed as a result of intermarriage, i.e., the Métis, and treaty relationships.

Following population decline and recovery and associated high rates of intermarriage, Native Americans in the United States had to increasingly rely on formal certification as proof of their *Indianness*. This formal certification and the tribal membership based upon it was important in the development of different categories of Native Americans in the United States. These categories reflect fundamentally a dichotomy seen by Native Americans themselves for over a century; that is, Native Americans as *Native Americans* defined by biological lineage and tribal Native Americans defined by tribal membership (and typically participation), also defined by biological lineage but extending far beyond it.

Conclusions

The Shawnee leader Tecumseh exclaimed in 1811 in a speech to the Choctaw and Chickasaw: “Where today are the Pequot? Where are the Narragansett, the Mohican, the Pokanoket, and many other once powerful tribes of our people? They have vanished before the avarice and the oppression of the White Man, as snow before a summer sun” (see Thornton 1987, ix).

These tribes experienced avarice and oppression but they did not vanish, although their sizes have been reduced. Each is a federally recognized tribe today: the Mashantucket Pequot of Connecticut is an extremely economically successful tribe of 635 formal members (circa 2000); the Narragansett of Rhode Island is a tribe of 2,661 (circa 2000); the Mohican Nation, Stockbridge Munsee Band of (now) Wisconsin is a tribe of 1,513 (circa 2000); and the Pakanoket/Wampanoag is a tribe seeking federal recognition, with the Wampanoag—the Pakanoket were a tribe of the Wampanoag Nation—Tribe of Gay Head (Massachusetts) being federally recognized with a membership of 959 (circa 2000) (see U.S. Department of the Interior 1999; also websites of the individual tribes).

Hundreds of Native American tribes in addition to these four did not vanish either, but continue today, each with its religion, language, epistemology, art, music, traditions, locale, and, to one degree or another, economy. It is within the social and cultural context of these tribes—whatever form they may take—and not just as members of a defined Native American *population* per se that Native Americans persevere as a separate, distinct people into the twenty-first century.

Notes

1. It is reasonably estimated that the total indigenous population in the Western Hemisphere declined from some 60 to 70 million—compared to over 500 million elsewhere in the world circa 1492—to as few as 5 million, then recently recovered to around its pre-Columbian level (see Denevan 1992).

2. A comparison of the differential depopulation and survival of two tribes within the same region—the Yuki and Tolowa of California—may be found in Thornton (1986b).

3. The common cold was probably present in both hemispheres prior to the arrival of Columbus: cold sufferers are supposedly depicted in Egyptian, Mayan, and Aztec hieroglyphs.

4. Changing definitions and procedures for enumerating Native Americans used by the U.S. Bureau of the Census also had an effect on the enumerated population size from census to census during this century. For example, sometimes “mixed” individuals were reported as being of the father’s “race” but other times of the mother’s “race.” Now, self-reporting is used.

5. The U.S. Bureau of the Census and Statistics Canada use somewhat different approaches to enumerate Native American populations. The U.S. Census now uses self-reporting, either a single Native American “race” and one in combination with other “races.” Statistics Canada now uses individuals reporting themselves as “Aboriginal identity” or “Aboriginal origin or ancestry.”

6. Discussions of American Indian leaders of this period may be found in Iverson (1982); Hagan (1985); and Moses and Wilson (1985); see also Eastman (1977); Mathes (1990); Prucha (1978); and Pratt (1964).

7. In addition, there are numerous Native American groups seeking federal recognition (e.g., the Muwekma Ohlone in California) and many others who may do so in the future. There are also a small number of Native American groups recognized by states but not by the federal government (e.g., the Miccosukee Seminole in Florida).

8. Enrollment criteria have sometimes changed over time. Often, the change has been to establish minimum blood quantum requirements: in 1931, the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians established a one-sixteenth blood quantum requirement for those born thereafter (Cohen n.d. [1942], 5). Sometimes the change has been to establish higher requirements: the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes have tightened their membership requirements since 1935; and in 1960 established that only those born with a 1/4 or more blood quantum could be tribal members (Trosper 1976, 256). Today, in a time of economic prosperity for *some* tribes through gaming and other enterprises, restrictions of membership are occurring more frequently as the economic benefits of tribal membership are increased.

9. See, for example, letter of Senator John McCain to Mr. Dill, June 24, 1996, in response to signatures and postings via the internet (<http://www.dickshovel@mccain.html>).

10. Recent discussions of the cultural genocide of Native Americans in the United States may be found in Grounds, Tinker, and Wilkins, eds. (2003) and Moore (2003); see also Adams (1995); Meyer (1994); Lyden and Legters (1992); McDonnell (1991); Hoxie (1984); Legters (1988).

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