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Bakalářská práce

Menoušková Karolína

Past and Present Life of the Native American People

Prohlašuji, že jsem tuto bakalářskou práci vypracovala samostatně na základě uvedených pramenů a literatury.

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Menoušková Karolína

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Abstract

Introduction

Most people outside the academic sphere do not have much information about the Native Americans. The only sources of any information are usually either movies or books which are, especially for Czech viewers or readers, not very informative regarding historical background and therefore, in many aspects, do not correspond with reality. The general idea of the Native Americans, also known as Indians, arises from these adventurous stories and if it were not for Karl May and his stories about Winnetou and Old Shatterhand, only few people would have a clue who an Indian is and where he actually came from. The most common picture of an Indian is a man with dark skin, riding a horse with his black hair waving in the air, hunting buffalos either sporadically dressed or in their leather clothing, living in a teepee. The reality is, of course, much more complicated and it is not as idyllic as it is presented in those movies. There is much more worth exploring in Indian life and not just the well-known Cherokee, Sioux, Apache or Navajo tribes. It is necessary to go deeper into the history - to the Ice Age and then back to the present.

In my work, I will examine the life of the Native Americans. I will try to write up their life evolution from the moment they entered the continent until the current situation. The aim of the thesis is to depict their original lifestyle, which was dependent on nature, and then changes caused by discovering and colonizing the North America by Europeans. Due to the facts found in literature, documentaries, journals and the Internet, I will create a larger picture. I will also mention some of the crucial points which led to the nearly complete extermination of the Indians.

It is not possible to fully understand the present without the knowledge of the past. Without at least basic information about habits and geographical location of the very first Indians, it is very hard to understand what the whole nation is about. People who are lucky enough to have studied American history in little more detail are familiar with some of the actions and events which happened between those two different nations. But what is not mentioned in the textbooks – at least not to a sufficient extent – is the Indian point of view. That is also the aim of my bachelor thesis – to find as much information as possible from the people who witnessed those radical changes happening during the late nineteenth century and, in the last part of my thesis, to summarize current situation from the Indians who now live either in a reservation or anywhere else.

1 First settlements

From the European point of view, the history of colonization of the American continent starts in 1492 when Christopher Columbus sailed over the Atlantic Ocean and successfully landed in America. Because he thought he was in India he started to call the local people Indians. Even though the designation is false, it remains the same. America had been a homeland for many different kinds of tribes for thousands of years. However, even these inhabitants, so called Native Americans, are in fact not native either. They came there from different continents. Burland (Burland, 1975, p. 5-8) claims that there is no confirmation of any race incurred independently from African and Eurasian ones and because of that we can assume that all American inhabitants are in fact immigrants.

Until today there still has not been any proof which would be so reliable that scientists could confirm what time exactly the settling started and under what circumstances. Several theories have developed but most of them were confuted. The most common theory speaks about people coming to America over Bering Strait in the last Ice Age. During that period the level of the ocean decreased substantially due to formations of an iceberg. The iceberg created some kind of bridge which enabled people to go from Asia to North America. The hunters from Siberia came to Alaska for animals. Because those tribes lived in the nomadic way of life they moved southwards. Nevertheless, this is still just a theory. (Wissler, 1966, p. 7-15)

1.1 The world of ancient hunters

For many years there have been disputes about the existence of so called Paleo-Indians. But discoveries from the last century speak clearly about the existence of that race about 15 – 20 000 years ago. These Indians lived mostly in the nomadic way of life but proofs of their existence can be found in caves which they occupied for different periods of time. Thanks to discoveries of skeletons we can now say that their main source of food were mammoths. Those animals are well known for us from literature or movies but thanks to excavations in Nevada another animal with tips in its bones made by human was discovered and that was a huge extinct sloth. Accordingly, Paleo-Indians were a well-formed and tough group of people who were able to kill an animal ten times bigger than themselves. But their strength was also in adaptation to nature and climate changes. Especially at the end of the Ice Age they had to deal with extreme warming. The iceberg started to melt and the big animals followed it to the north. People who were used to travelling from place to place following herds and hunting were now forced to change their

lifestyle. As the result of the decrease in the game animals, they started developing agriculture. Crops were now an important part of Indian food as well as meat. The tribes had no more reasons to travel and so they chose a more comfortable way of life necessary for agriculture. (Ceram, 1977 p. 282-289)

1.2 Mounds

After the period of the first farmers, two cultures showing more awareness than other tribes in America developed in that area. The north-east was occupied by Mound Builders - also called Hopewell people. The oldest ones inhabited the valley of Ohio River where they built mounds preserving till today. For building these mounds they must have used a lot of energy because it was necessary to bring soil from distant environs. The biggest and most famous ones are Serpent Mound and Fort Ancient. Both places had a spiritual meaning. In both places there was found a fireplace, a sacrifice alter and a place for the audience of spiritual ceremonies. Some of the mounds were made to celebrate solstice, in others were found bodies of ritual victims. From Ohio the Mound culture was transferred to the south of Tennessee and the Mississippi River where it remained even after the mounds by the Ohio River were no more sacred and built. In the territory of today's states of Georgia and Illinois formations of enormous proportions surrounded by smaller mounds were made in which people belonging probably to aristocracy were buried. (Stingl, 1966, p. 42-50)

Agriculture was very important in the life of Mound builders. Corn dominated the crops, but legumes and vegetables were also grown. Agriculture was already developed and due to favorable climate also very successful. Hunting, fishing and fruit picking was also very important. They learned how to get pearls from a river and liked to make beads from them. Besides pearls they also used clay beads to make themselves prettier. Ornamentation was generally very important and it seems to have reached a peak in that period. (Burland, 1975, p. 9)

Today it is unclear why this culture declined. It might have been due to a famine or wars. However, they were replaced by other tribes. Another option of their disappearance is that the Indians simply stopped believing in a higher purpose of the mounds and so stopped building it, it just faded into obscurity. The next generation did not build sacred hummocks anymore and that is why the Indians of the 15th century had no clue about mounds which were later covered by clay or forests. Many of them were also destroyed when the roads and cities were built. According to Wissler (Wissler, 1966, p. 34-40), there

is a slight chance of descendants of Mound builders in tribes of Iroquois, Hurons, Mohicans, Creeks, Cherokees, Natchez and Delaware Indians.

1.3 Pueblo

People living in the southwest of today's United States in the territory of Nevada, Arizona, Utah, Colorado, New Mexico and West Texas are named according to the houses they built. Pueblo were two or three floor houses standing very close to each other often by the rock or even in hardly approachable places. The building material was stone and clay bricks. It was possible for more than three hundred families to live there. In such villages the most people of the whole continent lived at one place. The biggest Pueblo developed in Mesa Verde, but Pueblo Bonito and Aztec Pueblo in New Mexico are also known. The most significant time of that period is estimated around 10th or 12th century. The Mound culture is around three hundred years younger than Pueblos. In comparison to Mexico and South America, both cultures were far less developed and did not reach the level of the first two. The whole North America adopted making of ceramics and discoveries in agriculture from the South. (Burland, 1975, p. 28)

There was no united culture in agriculture when it comes to Indians. Individual tribes living in those dwellings were quite different. What they had in common was sustenance from agriculture, making of decorative ceramics and society close to matriarchate. Women were leaders of the tribes, they owned the land and people's origin was derived from female lineage. Unlike in the other tribes, there was no clear borderline between man's and woman's work. Both men and women cultivated fields and made decorative ceramics and baskets. Their companions were domesticated dogs which helped with hunting of small wild animals. The main part of their meals was corn together with forest berries and nuts. Later generations learnt how to grow cotton or how to use the bow and arrows. They made clothes from cotton which was supplemented by fur in winter. Such information was gained thanks to discoveries of well-preserved mummies. (Ceram, 1977, p. 84-90)

Aztec Pueblo is one of the places where those mummies were found. Thanks to them we can imagine what the life of the Indians was like. The name Aztec is quite confusing in this context. It suggests that the inhabitants of this city were Aztec but the ruins in this pueblo by the Animas River in New Mexico were much older. The place is interesting for its mystery. Two generations of Indian people lived there but both left for an unknown reason. It might have been drought which ousted them away or another reason the scientist

still have not figured out. What they do know is that there are rooms which were used for some kind of ceremonies and that for period of hundred years it has been a 'ghost' town.

Generally, we can say that there were five periods of pueblos. (Ceram, 1977, p.129-130) However, it is very difficult to determine the exact years of their duration. Nevertheless, due to discoveries it is easier to understand the culture of those ancient Indians. The first ones who discovered pueblos were the Aztecs who found high buildings by the rocks. But they were looking for different places like the 'Seven Cities of Cibola', where streets covered with gold were supposed to be. With swords they invaded the pueblos and they missed the golden chance. If they had researched instead of plundering and killing the "primitives" and "pagans" we could have much more valuable information about life in those ancient times. After the Spaniards conquered the South, the Indians in Pueblos were forced to become Christians and to accept European culture. The Indians chose the tactic of passive resistance. They continued with their spiritual rituals and started avoiding white people, which made them become a closed society. A similar, but not so radical approach still prevails. (Ceram, 1977, p. 16)

2 Characteristics of an Indian community

2.1 Family life and upbringing of children

Europeans tend to be individualistic, whereas the Indians behave in the opposite way and profess completely different values. The life of an individual in the society of the Indians is subordinated to the needs of the community. To European people it may seem as if there is no room for individuality. It is important to understand that these two cultures are very different from the rudiments. We should not try to apply habits which work for us on the Indians. The basic distinctions have roots in the religion. The Christians see a woman as inferior to a man because she was made from Adam's rib. There is no such scheme in Indian culture. Women have a different position in the family than men and they do different jobs because of their different nature and physical dispositions. Their position is not subordinate; it is just different. As an example from the Navajo tribe, a man talking about women said: *"I have been thinking about men and women and I have always thought that men were stronger... It had been like that for a long time until my hair got gray. Then I realized that a man is far behind a woman because it is a woman who can manage all different kinds of hard work. I found out that she goes through numerous sufferings which she can bear...A woman suffers a lot during her life. When I realized that, I thought: A woman is stronger than a man."* (Lombardi, 1996 p.55) According to this and many other similar sayings we can acknowledge that men and women were basically equal. And it was the same when it comes to raising a child. Mothers carried very little children in special sacs on their backs. They did not leave sucklings or toddlers without supervision. Not even after they fell asleep. There was always danger of wild animals hunting children because they were an easy prey for them. Children were never physically punished the way white people punished their kids. But it doesn't mean there were no punishments at all. Little kids were either reprimanded, got an earful or box on the ear when they did not obey their parents, cheated or misbehaved. But six or seven- year-olds were expected to acknowledge the rules and behave well. All children were raised in a group where older children looked after the younger ones. They learnt by observation and imitation of the adults. They were taught to understand the sense of cohesiveness from their childhood. A very important part of raising the children was to make them understand the meaning of the tribe. One of the necessary conditions of the tribe integration was to gain practical knowledge and establish acceptable behavior. Such knowledge gained by practicing developed the character of an individual. (Lombardi, 1996, p. 24)

The principles of behavior were strict in the same way as laws for white people but they were not as much enforced. Every human being was a judge to themselves. Dishonesty was considered a crime. They lived according to their values and principles, not according to what the others thought about them. Parents taught their children that lying is a big shame and stealing is a bad thing but the highest wisdom cannot be taught by words. Everyone has to learn it on their own and very often the first teacher they had was their heart. Women did not have enough time to educate their children because they had a lot of work to do. That is also why kids started to help with work at a very young age. (Lombardi, 1996, p. 30-31)

2.2 Social system

The basic unit of the Indian society was a clan. Clans formed a tribe and the highest grouping (existing only in some cases) was a confederation of the tribes. The social system of the native Indians was always a clan society. In a clan society everything is subordinated to the interests of the group unlike our political society focusing on the individual.

A membership of the clan was determined by female lineage so a member had to be a descendant of a woman belonging to the particular clan. This system is the oldest way of derivation of the clan membership. It came to existence in times when the relationships were not monogamous and no form of marriage existed so the determination by male lineage could not be precise.

Later on the monogamy developed and in some clans the determination of the child did too. But even when monogamy existed the Indians had their “love triangles” as well. But they were able to handle such situation better than white men with their attitude. The chief of the tribe gave gifts to the person who was supposed to forgive and forget on behalf of the person who was guilty. If the two people were not able to do that they could not live together anymore. There was no headline in the newspaper talking about them. It was up to the couple to do what they consider the best. After that they lived happy lives no matter if it was together or separately. (Lombardi, 1996, p. 64)

In the Southeast of the US colonists came across five Indian nations which were in many ways ahead of them. The English called them “The five civilized tribes”. It was as early as in 1540 when Hernando de Soto met those five and they were at a higher developmental level than some European nations. Their structure was democratic and the legal system was well-elaborated. Social system excluded poverty and women were a part of all decisions. They had their own laws and every settlement had their own ‘peace chief’.

They did not suffer from hunger nor needed social facilities for the homeless or elderly. (Jeier, 2013, p. 70-71) Actually, the Indians respected old people the most. Sioux even paid tribute to them. Because to live for so long they had to be brave and strong and good warriors and the younger generation tried to be like them. They never let old people without help and they looked up to them as if they were some kind of Gods whom they loved. (Lombardi, 1996, p. 63).

The Indian nations of the big prairies were strictly organized and they lived together in clans. That firm organization was necessary to survive tough conditions in the prairies. Only those who stood together were able to defend themselves against enemies and harsh nature. It would have been very impractical to live in the way white people did as couples. Everyone had their fixed place in that firm organization and everyone was important. (Jeier, 2013, p. 125)

It is important to realize that every tribe was like a big family. It had its leadership which looked after their own clan's rules which everyone had agreed on. Every single member mattered and anything that happened in the tribe was an issue of everyone. Those issues were then debated among the leaders of the tribe who were trusted by the whole tribe. This is how their democracy worked. (Holzbachová, 1966, p. 44)

As the Indians were dependent on hunting, hunters were the most important members of the society. And that is where the difference between man's and woman's work originated. Men expended a lot of energy at once during hunting whereas women's work was spread into smaller tasks during the whole day. Some tasks such as building a teepee required cooperation of more people. Women used to help each other and there were no conflicts. They stayed active till the old age which cannot be said about men. Old men let the others take care of them and they were not a part of the everyday worktime. When they moved from one place to another it was women who had to pack all the equipment of the tribe and it was also them who carried most of those items. Although men helped to carry some heavier stuff, their main task was to protect the tribe from danger. They had to watch the movements of their enemies. It was also them who made weapons, built raw constructions of their dwellings and sometimes together sometimes together with women portion the animals. Indian women had to do a lot of work during the day. They processed meat and skin of the hunted animals, prepared food and preserved it for the winter. They repaired their homes and made tools from wood, stone or animal bones. They also weaved, processed fabric and kept the fire. Their life was not easy in any aspect and not many people nowadays would be able to manage it. Women were certainly not slaves, but

without their hard work and its strict distribution it would be impossible to survive. (Jeier, p. 131, 2013)

2.3 Religion

Probably one of the most interesting things about Indians is their religion. But the word religion is not quite accurate here. At least not in the way white people understand it. And it is so, because there is no codex of commands or prohibitions. It would be incorrect to compare it to any other religion based on the concept of someone omniscient that counts people's sins and punishes them. The Indian religion is a great faith in human beings and life. Its unwritten codex was created by life experiences and wisdom. Therefore, the term religion should be seen as Indian's faithfulness to their traditions. Their 'religion' is not something they talk about or obtrude to someone, it is as natural as life itself. (Holzbachová, 1966 p. 53-54)

That something Indians believed in and what white people would name 'God' was The Great Spirit or sometimes called Great Mystery. But different tribes had different names for this spirit. For example the Huron's name was "Ha-Wen-Neyu" (Native Indian Tribes, 2017) and the Sioux called it "Wakhan Thanka". The difference between the whites and the Indians was and still is that to meet the spirit the Indians did not need a church. Their church were the forest, prairies, mountains, animals, etc. (Jeier, 2013, p. 132). For Lakota people it was a pipe, a tangible item which could made the connection between a human and Wakhan-Thanka. The pipe was used as affirmation of the faith. It also symbolized all meanings of the words like moral responsibility, ethics and religious and spiritual terms. It meant the same that bible, church, state and flag meant for white people. When they were smoking it, they realized the present of their saint Great Spirit. But neither nature nor The Great Spirit is perfect. They have good as well as bad qualities and it is good to learn something from both. (Lombardi, 1996, p. 16-22)

Until today some of the Indians tribes have been trying to keep their old religious traditions. Even though there was an attempt to transform Indians into Christians, it was not fully successful. The religion and old traditions keep on going at the pueblo Indians, where they dance and worship their own gods. (Jeier, 2013, p. 20-21) According to the Sioux Indians, there are many ways to worship their Great Spirit and all of them are good. They teach their kids that the method is not as important as the faith itself. Just Wakhan-Thanka knows which way is the best. (Lombardi, 1996, p. 33) However, the majority of

Indians today belong either to some Christian Church or the Native American Church. This church combines features of Christianity with all Indian religions.

3 Colonization of NA by Europeans

This chapter will be important for realizing how fast and brutal the colonization of America was. How quickly thousands of people disappeared for good due to Europeans – the people who never respected territories of the Native American people, never understood the values of nature but simply took what was not theirs without hesitation or permission. Because of all that, because of that incredibly fast change which happened in their life, the Indians had no chance to adapt, evolve or progress.

It all started with Cristopher Columbus who named those people Indios. Those people were Taíno people who lived on an island called San Salvador and because they were generous and polite by nature, they welcomed Europeans warmly. But this way of thinking was not common for the Europeans and Columbus wanted them to work and adopt Europeans manners. The Indians were not against the new religion, but they were against violence produced by the Spaniards who were looking for gold while burning and destroying local villages and keeping the Taíno and Arawak people in captivity. Their resistance led to the tragic extinction of those two tribes just within a decade. These events started the Indians' problems with white people. In New England, it all began in a peaceful way. Pemaquid people helped to survive the Pilgrims the first winter and those two ethnics lived together in peace for several years. But as there were more white people coming, they needed more land. It was in 1625 when the colonists asked for more land and the Pemaquid people did not quite understand as they considered the land a gift from The Great Spirit which belongs to no one. However, they finally agreed and from this agreement the first legitimate document about a land given to English colonists by the Indians was created. But other immigrants did not bother with any documents and pushed Indians beyond the Appalachian Mountains. There was an attempt to force away the colonists from the continent but the Indians underestimated the power of the colonists and after years of fights they were practically exterminated. Indian women and children were sold to slavery. When another tribe called Raritans was attacked by the Dutch and killed four of their men in defense, the Dutch massacred two villages in return. It went like that for over two hundred years, as the Indians were instantly pushed more to the inland. There were some tribes like Miamis who tried to act with whites in a peaceful way but they had been receding for so long that in the end they had no land left. (Brown, 1991, p. 9-12)

Andrew Jackson, who became a president of the United States in 1829, was not popular among Indians as he killed thousands of them while they were protecting their territory, which had been given to them by the US government forever. So again, the Indians were moved behind the border, which was represented by the Mississippi river at that time. That was supposed to be for good and the border should have prevented any conflicts between Native Americans and the immigrants. To make sure those conflict would not happen, the US government sent soldiers to those areas and military camps were created. (Native Americans and The Land, 2017)

That period lasted for three hundred years after Columbus's arrival and his first contact with the friendly tribe of Taíno who had been entirely exterminated by then. All of their heritage and culture had been destroyed and their land had become plantations where slaves worked. After the island had nothing more to offer as it had been consumed by white people who had changed it into wasteland, the people left. On the mainland four tribes had been completely exterminated, and other twelve scattered into small groups and the white people still continued in destruction of something that used to be sacred for the Indians. (Brown, 1991, p. 12)

One of the saddest moments in the first half of the nineteenth century was the Indian removal called "Trail of Tears". That removal affected Eastern tribes who were moved behind the border of the Mississippi River. Because gold was found in the Appalachian Mountains, the white people did not care about the Indians and wanted them gone as fast as possible. And because the Indians were not prepared for that kind of journey, lots of them died on the way. The number of dead Cherokees during the journey was around five thousand. The border behind which the Indians lived was supposed to be permanent. However, it wasn't as people going to the west kept crossing the line. Therefore, Washington politicians came with a document called Manifest Destiny, which was in fact a piece of paper justifying the theft of the land, which had been acknowledged as the Indian territory. (History, 2017) With this document the Indians came close to their end. Not in the sense of extinction, but the end of their traditional lifestyle, free movement and free will. However, there were still tribes who tried to fight for their land and their homes. It still looked optimistic for the Indians in 1851 when the chiefs of four biggest tribes met the people from the United States and they agreed on keeping peace and friendly behavior towards each other. But as it was mentioned before, the American side was not really good in keeping their part of the deal. Therefore, it is surprising that the Indians still tried to behave with respect and without violence towards them. But the Indians' patience did not

last forever. It was in 1859 when they kindly reminded the new settlers who had come to dig gold in their territory that they could dig, but after they were done they should leave because that was not their home. (Brown, 1987, p. 52). The diggers did not leave and when the Congress of the United States issued a law about a free land for dwellers in the West, somehow without any discussion with the people who had inhabited the land for thousand years, it started a series of wars. Wars which lasted for thirty years. The Americans knew that the situation of the Indians was not good. They even had a commissioner for Indian Affairs whose name was Ely Parker. (Indian Country Media Network, 2017)

And it was him who said: *"Although this country was one wholly inhabited by Indians, the tribes, and many of them once powerful, who occupied the countries now constituting the states east of the Mississippi, have, one by one, been exterminated in their abortive attempts to stem the western march of civilization...If any tribe remonstrated against the violation of their natural and treaty rights, members of the tribe were inhumanly shot down and the whole treated as mere dogs...It is presumed that humanity dictated the original policy of the removal and concentration of the Indians in the West to save them from threatened extinction. But today, by reason of the immense augmentation of the American population, and the extinction of their settlements throughout the entire West, covering both slopes of the Rocky Mountains, the Indian races are more seriously threatened with a speedy extermination than ever before in the history of the country."* (Brown, 1991, p. 176). However, it changed nothing and before it all ended up in a massacre at Wounded Knee, where over 150 Indians dancing and praying for better life were killed, (Encyclopedia of the Great Plains, 2017) there was one last event called „The Run“. This act was planned by the government of the United States on the date of 22nd April, a year before Wounded Knee. It was a race of white people for land. The land which had been assigned to the Indians and to which they had been moved under conditions hard to survive. The land which had been given to them again as a permanent place to live. That land was raced by white people who then claimed it as theirs. (Holzbachová, 1966, p. 155-156)

3.1 Bringing Europe to America

3.1.1 Alcohol

Europeans learnt to smoke in America and in return they introduced alcohol to the Indians. Smoking and drinking became common and very popular. Unfortunately, it still prevails. In Europe, smoking did not cause as significant harm as alcohol caused to the Indians. It was something new to them, they had not experienced it before and therefore many of them were not prepared for its consequences. The Indians have another huge disadvantage when it comes to fighting with alcohol, because according to researches done on the Indians, they genetically degrade alcohol much harder than white people, which causes faster intoxication and a longer hangover. At the beginning, white people used alcohol as a weapon against the Indians when they wanted them to sign some agreements, but later it was consumed by the Indians in the reservations. They suffered from depressions after being put in limited space and felt constant restrictions coming from the whites so alcohol worked as escape from all that. However, the escape was just temporary and drinking alcohol, mainly whisky, was the final nail in the coffin of the Indians. They got alcohol from French and English fur traders for whom it was temporary income but as young hunters started to be drunk and hunted less, there was also less fur so in the upshot, it was the traders themselves who caused a decrease in fur production. (Wissler, 1966, p. 289-293)

North American Indians never discovered production of distilled alcohol. The Aztec in South America knew how to make alcohol and they became aware of its devastating effect. As many of them became alcoholics, they started to regulate its usage. They knew how dangerous it was and therefore who broke their rules once they were set could have been sentenced to death (Wissler, 1966, p. 295). But the North American Indians did not have such experience and that is why their fight against alcohol was very difficult. Even though the chiefs of the tribes understood danger of this liquid, their orders and bans had no effect. England and France were hoping to gain favor of the strong tribes by selling them alcohol in order to avoid battles. The first country which prohibited selling alcohol was Canada. The USA started with regulations as well, but it did not stop dealers from smuggling alcohol to the reservations as it meant a good source of income for them. Alcohol still remains a big problem for the Indians and it will be analyzed later in this work.

3.1.2 Weapons

As the Indians had been using primitive weapons all their lives, the first appearance of a shotgun scared them. However, as brave warriors they understood quite quickly what power was hidden in those guns. They realized it was necessary to obtain them for future battles to defend their own lives. At the beginning, the Indians were stealing guns from soldiers, but later on Europeans started to sell guns to the Indians as it was good business for them. Despite being equally armed, the Indians lacked training in using guns as well as the ability to fix them. So even when some tribes fought with better weapons compared to European soldiers it meant no advantage for them. In addition, the Indians were not able to produce their own gunpowder, which made them dependent on Europeans.

3.1.3 Horses

Majority of people think that the Indians have always been riding horses, but the truth is different. Even though today's idea of an Indian is connected with horse-riding, the Indians living before Columbus's arrival did not know horses at all. Their ancestors living in South America and the northern part of the North America knew horses, but they never learnt how to ride them. When Spaniards came to America on horses for the first time, the Indians thought that the man and the horse were one creature. And it was Spaniards who brought most of them to the continent. Gradually, the Indians learnt how to raise them and the horse became an important animal for them, especially in the prairies. Tribes in the southwest often favored the donkey, which was not only less demanding when it comes to food, but also helpful in carrying stuff. (Brandon, 1987, p. 115)

Horse breeding brought some new opportunities to the Indians' lives, especially hunting. They started to hunt buffalos faster and more effectively. The Indians became great horse riders and better skilled riders than their European enemies. Children and even old people knew how to ride a horse, which was important, because they used them while traveling and moving to different camps and destinations. But horses were also widely used in agriculture helping to cultivate large fields. The Indians were well-aware of the importance of horses for their lives so they treated them thoughtfully.

3.2 Epidemics

Diseases brought to America claimed lives of thousands of the Indians. Since the Indians had never experienced illnesses like a flu, they had no antibodies against them so contracting them meant a great danger to them. Epidemics of European diseases weakened, if not exterminated, many tribes that used to be strong. For example, the tribe of Blackfoot

barely existed after the chickenpox epidemic which erupted among the tribes of the great plains and had the most tragic consequences. It is speculated that members of that tribe were infected on purpose by traders who wanted cheaper fur. While the tribe was weakened, they probably had no choice but to sell it for whatever price in order to survive (Wissler, 1966, p. 106). Whether it was on purpose or not, together with alcohol it caused damage which is hard to imagine.

3.3 Scalping

Scalping is a term used when a part of skin including hair is cut off the top of the head. It was usually practiced on dead bodies mostly by the north American Indians, but there were also cases when this ritual was done while the person was still alive. In Europe this ritual was forgotten and that is why its origin is attributed to the Native Americans, who used it in their wars and battles among each other, but also while fighting the army of the United States. The act itself symbolized defeat of the enemy and by cutting off their skin with hair, all their strength was taken away. Because the Indians also fought against each other, Europeans took advantage of it and paid the Indians for scalping the tribe they were fighting against. The bounty was announced on women and children as well, which resulted in a lot of people killing the Indians just for the reward. Even though there was some percentage of people who survived scalping, they were left scarred and mutilated. (Ceram, 1977, p. 285)

4 Assimilation of the Native Americans

4.1 Dawes Act

In the nineteenth century, after the world of the Indians as they knew it ended, American politicians decided to help the Indians assimilate into American society. No one seemed to have thought of possible negative impacts of their plan. They wanted the Indians assimilate as fast as possible whether they liked it or not.

As the American population was still increasing, they required more land which belonged to the Indians. To legalize their claims, they created a new law called Dawes Severalty Act signed by president Grover Cleveland. (History, 2017) The goal of the law was to cancel common land holdings in most reservations and focus on individuals, which in fact meant the end of the traditional Indian life and forced them to live the life of the white. Even though the act was approved and signed in 1887, it was not until 1890 when the Jerome Commission started negotiations with the tribal chiefs of Cheyennes and Arapahoes. During those negotiations the Indians were threatened, their resistance broken down and in the end they were forced to agree with losing uncultivated land. Although President Cleveland might have tried to improve the hard living conditions of the Indians in reservations by encouraging them to take up farming and become part of the American society, it did not do any good. (Nichols, 1986, p. 205-206)

Every Native American family received 160 acres of land and the rest was sold to the government. Native Americans were supposed to work in the same way as all other white Americans. If they did not use their land solely for farming, it was devolved to the US. Moreover, the government imposed fees even on those who managed to farm their land. Despite their protests, from 1887 to 1900 the Indians lost half of their land and many of them were forced to go to work. Nevertheless, Cheyennes and Arapahoes managed to survive the constant attack of bureaucrats and made it to the twentieth century even in bigger numbers than in previous decades. It shows how much inner strength those people possessed. (Nichols, 1986, p. 206-210)

In 1934 the Dawes Act was found wrong and finally abolished by President Franklin Roosevelt.

4.2 Agriculture expansion

One of the reasons why white Americans needed the land was farming. But as the great plains were not suitable for cultivation, they started to use them as pasture for cattle

which resulted in killing the buffalos by ranchers. The act of killing herds of buffalos led to the last stand of the Indians against the ‘pale faces’.

The Indians were not some killing savages, who needed to be eliminated or completely assimilated, which most of the Americans of the nineteenth century thought. On the other hand, they were not cultivated primitives or innocent creatures brutally attacked by ruthless Americans either. That is an idea which people take from romantic movies or books. Johnson claims, that there was no substantial difference in intelligence between the Indians and white Americans, which can be seen in a significant number of the Indians blending with the white resulting in losing their racial and ethnic distinction.

The problem of the Indians was and probably still is that they had deep-seated conceptions of their lives. Once settled, they actually became skilled farmers. However, most Indian men preferred hunting because they considered farming as women’s work. Those who became successful farmers blended with the white community and as it was mentioned above, they lost their tribal awareness. That is why the Indian tribes considered shooting out of the buffalos as a direct attack on their tribal integrity and existence, whether it was in the reservations or outside. Even though the Indians did not like acting of the whites, there were just a few quarrels between the travelers, pioneers and the Indians. Some incidents which happened during that period of time were usually caused by misunderstanding or reckless behavior, like in the case of General Custer at Little Bighorn. The retaliatory measures resulted in the definitive end of the Prairie Indians. (Johnson, 2000, p. 412-415)

4.3 Outcomes

The critics of the Dawes Act blamed the politicians for violating another agreement between them and the Indians, as the law made access for white people to the Native American land in their territories. However, as for assimilation, the act turned out to be beneficial for the Indians living outside reservations. If they did not sell their land for 25 years, they became legitimate owners, acquired citizenship and became part of the American farming community.

The process of assimilation also affected the Indians’ language. Under pressure of the contact with the whites they had to start learning English and began to unite their native languages. Besides creating their own lingua franca, they also established the first pan-Indian religion. (Johnson, 2000 p. 415- 417) In 1865 the number of Indians living in tribal groups was estimated to be around three hundred thousand. The number did not drastically

change in the following 80 years. By the end of the year 1900 all tribal Indians lived in reservations and twenty-four years later they were given citizenship. At that time, there were over 200 reservations in 40 states. As the Indian population was decreasing in the nineteenth century, the number of acres they owned dropped accordingly - from 150 acres at the beginning of the century to just one third by its end. The situation started to improve with John Collier, who established an association for defense of the American Indians and became the Commissioner of Indian Affairs. He criticized federal politics and was trying to return the Indians their independence, strengthen their confidence and make the government stop selling their land. In the middle of the twentieth century some tribes gained properties after winning litigations. However, at that time they were forced to face new issues as their adolescents did not desire to live in the way their ancestors had been living. (Johnson, 2000, p. 415-416)

4.4 Problems of Indian children

One important part of the assimilation process in the nineteenth century was the aim to civilize Native American children by educating them in schools. But those schools lacked any kind of empathy towards the kids, punishing them for using their mother tongue and practicing their rituals. (Nichols, 1986, p. 200)

In the second half of the twentieth century, the young generation of Indians was facing another crisis. They suffered from identity loss; they felt ignored and left behind. A scientist who was interested in this field examined children from the Hopi tribe and Oklahoma Indians. One girl described what her day at school looked like and what she was taught. Irritation could be felt from her expression, especially when she talked about how Native American children were treated. They were considered ignorant and put aside somewhere where they could not bother anyone and did nothing all day long. They felt as if they meant nothing to Americans. They were just a kind of attraction to them as one boy from the Hopi tribe described. He perceived the US government, which sent the BIA people, as a law making machine producing restrictions, bans and orders. At school they were shown pictures of white people they were supposed to cheer on but, for some reason, they felt it was not something they should do. From their point of view, there were just a few things belonging to them while all the rest had been claimed by the Americans, including the Indians. (Nabokov, 1991 p. 401-403)

5 Present

5.1 Economic situation

Whoever wants to be successful and develop in economy must have a land, which he is able to control. Before the white men arrived to America, the Indians were able to use and move around the whole country. But because according to Europeans the Indians did not fully utilize the land, they took it, and that is where the current problems are rooted. In all those policies worked to Indians disadvantage. The problem is also in the point of view. From the European perspective, the usage of the land by the Indians was immaterial and thus ineffective. But it is important to realize, that these two cultures had completely different scale of values and ideas, how to operate with the nature. (Ross, Moore, 1987 p. 313-315)

Today's situation has improved since the late twentieth century, but there are still many problems the Indians have to deal with. They were able to develop in economic and from their incomes built schools and facilities for older people. However, the main problem is unemployment. So, the main goal of tribal government is to create jobs for their members. They are doing that by starting businesses and firms. Nevertheless, the unemployment is still very high in comparison to an average in the USA. National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) is focusing on this problem and is trying to improve by educating tribal leaders in business, because it can bring them into market and global economy. And even though US government has not been supportive in financing, the Indians created their own system in government and social sphere. It is a crucial question for the tribes to have their own finances and access to capital, but as they have problem with establishing taxes, it hard to reach this goal. (National Congress of American Indians, 2017)

Infrastructure and housing is important part of the tribal economy, but the living conditions of Native Americans are very bad, and therefore the economic is lagging in this area. NAIHC, which takes care of the native Indians housing, is trying to involve federal government in order to help finance projects, which should lead to better living conditions as most of the citizens suffer from lack of water, electricity, market and life in poverty. These conditions are similar to the conditions, which are experienced by people living in the developing countries. So despite the existence of these organizations like NAIHC and IHA, the number of people who are either homeless or live in overcrowded houses is very high. (National American Indian Housing Council, 2017)

5.2 Reservations

Those Indian's tribes which survived battles with white people, epidemics, removals, alcohol or fights, which they had among each other, were at the end of nineteenth century moved to reservations. This act meant the end of traditional life of the Indians. Many of them were dependent on nomadic way of life, on following herds of buffalos. Some of them were also good farmers, who needed land to farm on. But the reservations enabled both of these options because movement was impossible and the land had not been suitable for farming. This caused, that many of them were starving. The starvation was not the only problem. At the beginning the Indians were forced to work under supervision of the white soldiers. Thus, the living conditions were very hard and many of the Indians did not want to go there. The most famous one was Geronimo, who lived in San Carlos reservation for a year, but due to miserable conditions he decided to run away. After eight years on the run, general Crook persuaded Geronimo to come back to San Carlos. But after another year Geronimo run away again. The reason for the second escape was a prohibition of alcohol. He thought, that he will not manage to live in a reservation "as a woman" and he was also afraid, that he will be hanged and die inside the reservation, but he wanted to die as a free man. In a sense, his end represents the end of all Indians and their current situation. Before his death in 1909 he made money on tourism as he was an attraction and was giving autographs to people, who came to see what was left from the initial, rich Indian's life. (Jeier, 2013, p. 226-233)

It is almost a hundred years since all of the Indians became a US citizens, nevertheless, their situation in the reservations has not improved very much. Today exists around 326 areas, which are called federal Indian reservations and the number of Indians is around two million. However, there are people who live outside the reservations wherever in the world and number of these Indians is approximately same as the number of Indians living in tribes and reservations. Many of them left, because of the bad living conditions or they simply wanted to leave for better education, jobs, traveling or any other reason. Despite they left their homeland for whatever reason, most of them is coming back at least for visitation or holidays. (United States Department of the Interior, 2017)

There are organizations like NAA, which is trying to help and improve living conditions in the reservations. For example, many of the Indians live far away from medical facilities or shops with food. There are fast-foods and low-quality food. As it was mentioned before, the Indians used to grow their own foodstuff, but there is hard to grow something in territory of the reservations. Due to low quality food, deteriorative life style

and inadequate health service the Indians suffer from different diseases connected with wrong diet. In the lead of diseases is diabetes followed by heart attack. High percentage of deaths is also due to tuberculosis, which is a treatable disease if appropriate treatment is provided. The Americans are the second country in the world with the most obese people and the Indians have adapted their western way of life, but unlike the Americans, they do not have proper health care.

Besides the diseases, there are other factors influencing Indians life – drugs and alcohol. It has been problem since the first time these substances were introduced to them. It causes troubles in families for generations. As it was mentioned before the Indians are more prone to be addicted. Distributors of alcohol target them because of that and also “because of their geographic isolation and persistent poverty”. (National Congress of American Indians, 2017) As the treatment is expensive and health care is poor, the result of these problems connected with alcohol (depression, domestic violence, lying, stealing, bad health condition, etc.) is very often a suicide. For some tribes, it became a huge problem as it reached number one cause of death among youngsters. Therefore, it is important to focus mainly on prevention in Indian communities. Despite all of that, many of the Indians want to stay at their land and preserve their heritage.

5.3 Casinos

The alcohol problem is closely connected with gaming. Unfortunately, the tribal government is highly dependent on it, as the main income represent the casinos. Without them, it would be impossible for the tribal government to fund their social services and health care, which is already in bad condition. With the presence of the casinos, there are also jobs available for citizens. Just for Navajo Nation there are four grand casinos including different kinds of wellness centers, which crates over one thousand jobs for Native people. (Developing a Navajo Gaming Economy, 2017). Without the casinos, which give job to Native and Non-native American, would have been the percentage of unemployment much higher. It is obvious, that this business brings positive aspects, but there are also negative effects including thefts, violent crimes, larceny and also bankruptcy around the casinos. (The National Bureau of Economic Research, 2017) The casino were allowed in the reservations in order to help Native people with unemployment, but according to doctor Birgit Hanse, the managers of the casinos, who should give jobs to Natives, have very often half of the stuff consisting of white people. (Jeier, 2013, p. 270)

5.4 Protection of the Culture

Indian culture is one of the richest in the world and many people became interested in it. There are over 550 recognized tribes of Native American and Alaska Native tribes in the USA and every tribes have unique and different traditions. Nevertheless, due to evolution and ideas like “Kill the Indian, Save the Man” or federal laws, which enabled to practice their religion and ceremonies, is the Indian culture in jeopardy. Many symbols and parts of the culture has disappeared.

5.4.1 Language

Language is one of the dominant things, which strengthen tribal identity, but unfortunately, many of them is on the brink of extinction. It is assumed, that in thirty years, there will be just twenty native spoken languages. This is caused particularly by government policies, which are applied in schools and somehow disturb connection with their culture. Brian Charging Cloud, who is from Lakota nation, is worried, that if the people forget Lakota’s language, there is a danger they might lose their culture. To prevent that, he is telling stories in Lakota language in local radio, he is also teaching this language over the internet and at college in Cheyenne River reservation. (Jeier, 2013, p. 296)

5.4.2 Symbols

Symbols of Indian culture became popular in American society especially in sport, as some clubs are using them in their logo. According to NCAI, it has negative effect on Native culture, because it provokes in people stereotypes and myths associated with Indians, which are incorrect. That is why they try to ban usage of these symbols, unless the tribal government agrees. But it is long run process, which might not be successful. However, the goal is to protect the Indian culture for being misunderstood, mocked and offended. (National Congress of American Indians, 2017)

5.4.3 Sacred places

When the Europeans came to America, they brought their religion with them and tried to teach the Indians about Christianity. It is true, that between the religion of the Indians and Christianity we can find some similarities. However, the reason why the Indians never stopped practicing their religion, is because for them, nature has completely different value than for the white people. Their faith is the Great Spirit, who is in everything, including nature. They consider Earth as our mother and therefore, we should look after it. But the white people never understood their faith. People coming from Europe

knew, that the weather is not affected by Gods and prayers and that is why they refused Indians beliefs. What is sacred for Indians, is not sacred for white people and that is why even today Indians and US government have disagreements. (Lombardi, 1996, p. 72)

There are two main problems. The first one is, that the Indians are not able to practice their rituals on the land where they used to, because now it is a National Park. The second one is, that people are allowed to places, which the Indians consider sacred. Each tribe is different and so is the religion they practice. Every tribe has various rituals, but the core is the same. NCAI is trying to fight for religious freedom for the Indians, which would mean free access to sacred places, no restrictions on ceremonial practices and free usage of objects for rituals, which are banned to have or use. There exists variety of sacred places either built by the Indians or places, which are connected with some legend or a story. These places are very important part of their culture and therefore, there is strong attempt to protect them as these places often suffer from pollution, vandalism, private and public action or they are simply under threat of development. (Native American Netroots, 2017)

5.5 Indian Youth

The last but not the least part of this work is dedicated to young people with the Native American roots. Young people are very important as they provide a special perspective on the world in every nation around the world. As the Indians suffer from numerous problems, their attention is focused on their youth. Especially in the reservations, half of the people are teenagers below seventeen years old. This situation is connected with poor health care, alcohol and other problems related. Lavern Yankton, who was an alcoholic, claims that mainly young people are becoming addicted, because there is no hope in the reservations. Even though alcohol is prohibited there, there are people who smuggle it in anyway. And because the Indians get drunk much faster, he thinks it is a curse for them. (Jeier, 2013, p. 272)

5.5.1 Education

A specialist on life of the Indians is the doctor Hans, who describes current problems. The Indians have often disagreements among themselves. There are people who prefer traditional way of life and on the other hand are people, who identify themselves with a modern life. In the schools are either none or just some subject, which would educate the Natives about their culture. Textbooks, which they have are written for white middleclass kids and they do not concern about ethnic groups and because the educational

system is underfunded, the tribal government cannot afford proper material. It is part of the reason why the young Indians have a problem with their identity and Monique Vondall-Rieke is aware of it. She is an Assessment and Verification of Constancy of Performance (AVCP) Tribal Center Director, where she is dealing with justice not only among the Indians. She also a director at North Dakota University, where she is helping young people to learn more about themselves and their culture. She also sees the trouble of the Indians in the prejudices and cliché connected with them and she encourages the students to fight against these prejudices. To be able to reach this goal, she knows her people have to be educated. Vondall-Rieke believes, that the Indians are able to deal with their own problems, if they have better civil rights. According to her, the key for better and new future is to learn from the past. (Jeier, 2013, p. 273)

The tribal leaders realize how important the Native Youth is. They invest a lot of time into them together with organization supporting education and Native communities, which work on helping young people to understand their cultural identity. 'Running Strong' is one these organizations, which focuses on the Native Youth in general. It is necessary to start from the bottom and "help the American Indian people meet their immediate survival needs while creating opportunities for self-sufficiency and self-esteem in American Indian youth". (Running Strong for American Indian Youth, 2014)

Conclusion

The Native Americans have a rich history and a challenging present. The aim of this thesis was not only to depict their original lifestyle but also to describe their current situation. Therefore, the readers should be able to make their own assumptions about the Indians and Indian culture based on wide historical knowledge provided in this work together with the main events, which influenced their evolution. This work is enriched by testimonies of different members of the Indian tribes and tries to portray all of those events and situations from their point of view.

I put together information obtained from resources into five chapters, which are in chronological order, thus they represent a time line of the Indian life since Ice Age until the present. At first, I summarized the first inhabitants of the American continent and then I focused on a general description of the Indian community. A crucial point in the whole Native American history is discovery of American continent by the Europeans and its consequences, which caused problems of the current situation. Therefore, I mentioned some important points during the first interactions until the Indian Citizenship Act.

Infelicity for the Indian nations represented white men. Two different civilizations collided and were not able to co-exist. Europeans were far more civilized and had completely different values in life. The Native Americans were suddenly hundred years forward without a chance of a proper evolution. The white people were like a time machine, which took them into the future. Because of those 'lost years' some Indians still do have a problem with assimilation. The final part of my thesis is about all these problems and also about possible solutions. Many of the Indian tribes and people showed their strength within history and it is on them to remain strong and fight for a better future.

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Abstract

Jméno a příjmení:	Karolína Menoušková
Katedra:	Ústav cizích jazyků
Vedoucí práce:	Mgr. Jana Kořínková Ph.D.
Rok obhajoby:	2017

Název práce:	Život Severoamerických Indiánských Kmenů v Minulosti a Současnosti
Název v angličtině:	Past and Present Life of the Native American People
Anotace práce:	Tato práce je zaměřena na život indiánů Severní Ameriky a jejich historický vývoj až po současnost. Součástí práce jsou důležité mezníky historie, spojené s interakcí mezi indiány a bělochy, které částečně zapříčinili současnou situaci původních obyvatel.
Klíčová slova:	indián
Anotace v angličtině:	This thesis focuses on a life and evolution of the Native American people. It deals with past and present situation, influenced by important events during the colonization of the American continent.
Klíčová slova v angličtině:	The Native American, Indian, evolution, past, present, Europeans, colonization, tribe, government
Přílohy v práci:	Žádné
Rozsah práce:	34 stran
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