

WHAT YOUR 1970 TEXTBOOK DIDN'T TEACH YOU



17,000 B.C.E.

Oldest settlements in North America

Archaeological evidence signals Meadowcraft Rockshelter as the site of first settlements in the continent, as far as we know currently, dating back to perhaps 19,000 years ago. It is located 27 miles from Pittsburgh. It was continuously occupied until it was abandoned in the 18th century during the American Revolutionary War. The oldest town in what is now the Americas is the **Oraibi settlement founded by the Hopi** in Navajo country. It was established and has remained inhabited since before the 12th century.

1491

Maybe the last good year

1492

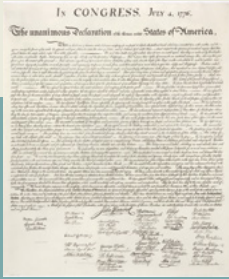
Columbus arrives

With the fall of Constantinople in 1453, commercial routes between Europe and Asia (primarily India and China) were interrupted, Christopher Columbus was convinced that a fast route could be found sailing across the Atlantic, under the (still-not-accepted-by-some-contemporaneous-or-contemporary-Europeans) hypothesis that the world was round. He looked for funding from court to court until the Spanish monarchs agreed to give him money. His arrival in what is now called the Caribbean started the process of European colonization and the kidnapping, murder, and displacement of Indigenous folks.

1565

First European settlements in Turtle Island

The first Europeans in these lands were Norse explorers who settled in what is now Greenland in the 10th century, and then what became Canada. Then, the Spanish messed everything up in the 16th century. Not happy with the conquest of the Aztec Incan Empires, these dumbasses invaded what's now Florida. The first permanent English settlement was in 1607, in what is now Virginia. The French were not as immediately good at messing things up as the Spanish and failed at settling for a while. They finally succeeded in 1634, in today's Wisconsin.



1776

American Revolution

The first English settlements were politically dependent on Queen Elizabeth who was dead by the Revolution even though she may also be immortal. But by the 1770s, the colonizers no longer wanted to colonize under the British flag, they wanted to be free to colonize on their own and decided to throw a lot of tea to the sea, and then shoot at the British Army. If you haven't read the whole thing, now is a good time to learn or remember that the **Declaration of Independence** was grounded in Indigenous genocide and stolen land and the enslavement of African peoples.

1876

Battle of Little Bighorn

In 1874, gold was found in Sioux territory (in modern-day South Dakota). Ulysses S. Grant's administration made an offer to buy the land, but it was rejected by the Sioux. The U.S. federal government responded with military aggression. In 1876, the Lakota, Northern Cheyenne, and Arapaho tribes allied against U.S. forces, with an overwhelming Indian victory. The leadership of **Crazy Horse (Oglala Lakota)** and **Chief Gall (Hunkpapa Lakota)** ensured victory.

1890

Massacre at Wounded Knee

The U.S. government continued to seize or attempt to seize Native lands. When these "negotiations" failed, the colonizers responded in ways like starving Indigenous communities, forced assimilation and kidnapping children to Christian boarding schools, or open war. During this period, the U.S. government broke a zillion treaties and divided the Great Sioux Reservation into five smaller zones. Along with forced assimilation came the U.S. government's clampdown on Native cultural and religious practices, like the **Ghost Dance**. And they also had government-hired Indian police.

Early in the morning of December 19, 1890, these capos came to arrest leader **Sitting Bull (Hunkpapa Lakota)** for being too strong and influential and generally being a threat to the land grab and genocide, but they said it was for not stopping his people from participating in Ghost Dances. A crowd gathered, altercations ensued, and Sitting Bull was shot to death.

As a result, known Indian troublemaker (as he was listed in U.S. Army documents) **Spotted Elk (Miniconjou Lakota)** took his followers to Pine Ridge, looking to meet with **Chief Red Cloud (Oglala Lakota)** and the other Lakota leaders. They set up camp at the Wounded Knee Creek, where they were found by the U.S. Seventh Cavalry on December 29, 1890. In the massacre that followed, U.S. soldiers murdered approximately 300 people, the vast majority of whom were women and children.

Our play *Between Two Knees* starts with this massacre, from which Isaiah is kind of rescued.



General Douglas MacArthur, Commander-in-Chief of the Allied Forces in the Southwest Pacific Area, on an inspection trip of battle fronts, met representatives of five different American tribes in one United States Army unit. Left to right: Sgt. Brown (Pima) Phoenix, Arizona; First Sergeant Virgil F. Brown of Pamee, Oklahoma; S/Sgt. Alvin J. Wilson (Chitatche) of Arizona; Sgt. Byron L. Tsigaine (Navajo) of Arizona; Sgt. Larry L. Bekin, (Navajo) of Copper Mine, Arizona (US SIGNAL CORPS PHOTO)



1879-1968

Boarding Schools

In 1879, Richard Henry Pratt founded the **Carlisle Indian Industrial School** in Pennsylvania, attempting to “civilize” Native Americans by stripping away their culture. His idea was: “Kill the Indian to save the man”? More boarding schools sprung up all around the country ripping children away from their families and communities. It was common that school authorities abused, raped, or molested the students, and it is unknown how many children died at these schools. Only after 1968 were the Indigenous nations able to manage the schools on their own terms. It was only just recently that Pope Francis acknowledged and apologized for the Catholic Church’s role in these criminal institutions.

In Between Two Knees,
Irma and Isaiah meet in a
boarding school.

1914-1918

WWI

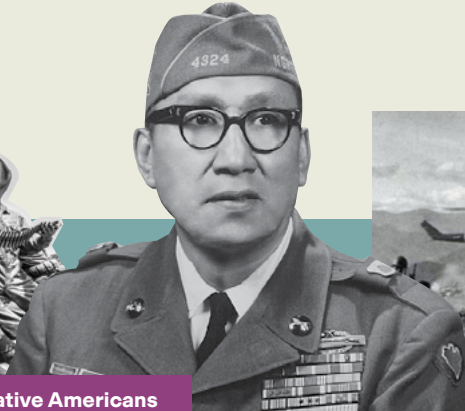
After centuries of colonialism and invasion of other nations, World War I was a conflict sparked by European countries seeking to achieve supremacy by invading nations on their own continent again and spreading out into Africa and the Middle East and blowing up ships in the Atlantic. And there was something about an Archduke. After four years of brutal conflict, peace was negotiated to stop the destruction. This war is not mentioned in the play, but we wanted you to know that 12,000 Native Americans fought for the U.S. during WWI.

1939-1945

WWII

World War II was a conflict between the Axis powers (Germany, Japan, and Italy) and the Allies (UK, USA, USSR, and China) that affected most countries in the world. The U.S. had stayed kind of neutral until 1941, when Japan attacked the naval base of Pearl Harbor in Hawaii. This war was one of the most brutal in human history, killing perhaps 80 million people including an estimated 6 million Jews. Victory in Europe came in May, 1945, but the war didn’t fully end until about 100,000 more civilians died in August, 1945 with the dropping of two Atomic Bombs on Japan, leading to their final surrender. 25,000 Native Americans fought for the U.S. in WWII, including the famed **Navajo Code Talkers**.

*In the play, Isaiah and
Irma’s son William proudly
enlists to fight in WWII.*



10,000 Native Americans fought for the U.S. in Korea, including a damaged and violent guy we meet in a scene of our play.

In *Between Two Knees*, Eddie fights in the Vietnam War, and this sequence is just like those films.

1945-1989

Cold War

The end of these world wars left two superpowers: the U.S. and USSR. Both struggled for global power and influence of their economic doctrines (capitalism and socialism, respectively and supposedly), while avoiding direct armed confrontation because of the threat of mutually assured annihilation through the development of weapons of mass destruction. So instead they fought proxy wars in Korea and Vietnam.

1950-1953

Korean War

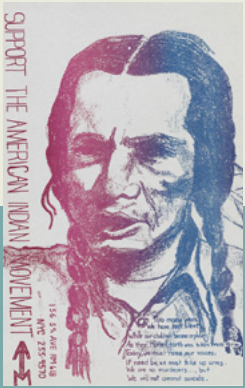
At the end of World War II, the USSR occupied the northern region of Korea, while the U.S. occupied the southern region. This created two new sovereign states, and in 1950 a war between North and South Korea started. Both superpowers became involved, leading to 3 million deaths, thousands of massacres, and destruction of all major Korean cities, until an armistice was signed in 1953.

1955ish-1975

Vietnam War

The Vietnam War was an armed conflict between North Vietnam, supported by the USSR, and South Vietnam, supported by the U.S. Negative public opinion, pressure from U.S. citizens, and depleted funds for war expenses, led the U.S. to recall troops from Vietnam in 1975. The calculation of casualties ranges from 1.4 to 3.6 million, including so many civilians. More than 42,000 Native Americans fought for the U.S. in Vietnam.

Many popular movies were made about this war (like *Apocalypse Now*, directed by Francis Ford Coppola; *Full Metal Jacket*, directed by Stanley Kubrick; and *Forrest Gump*, directed by Robert Zemeckis).



1968

The American Indian Movement

The American Indian Movement (AIM) was founded in Minneapolis by a group of formerly incarcerated Native Americans. In the wake of the Indian Relocation Act of 1956 and several other government initiatives that pushed Native Americans from their lands, away from their people, and into forced assimilation and cultural forgetting, AIM fought to reestablish Indian rights and sovereignty. Like many political and radical groups established at this time, they took action to address poverty, police brutality, and discrimination, in their case specifically against Indigenous people, framing these issues as consequences of settler colonialism in the Americas.

1973

Occupation of Wounded Knee by AIM

AIM accomplished several actions including the takeovers at Alcatraz Prison in California, the Bureau of Indian Affairs in Washington, D.C., and a replica of the Mayflower in Massachusetts. And now, we are back where our play began about an hour and a half ago. Richard Wilson was elected president of the Oglala Lakota in the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation the year before. Longstanding tensions rose to the surface, mostly because Wilson was corrupt and abusive. Residents turned to AIM, who tried to impeach him. When this failed, they occupied the town of Wounded Knee in 1973, questioning the failure of the U.S. government to fulfill treaties with Indigenous communities and demanding negotiations. Watergate was going down at the same time, so Nixon and his administration were distracted and disinterested. Meanwhile, to support the AIM occupation, activist **Sacheen Littlefeather** used the Oscar ceremony to bring attention to what was going on at Wounded Knee. She had gotten in touch with Marlon Brando and asked for his support of AIM and the protesters. So Brando boycotted the ceremony, and when his name was announced as the winner for Best Actor for *The Godfather*, Littlefeather delivered a speech protesting against Hollywood's representation of Indigenous people. Six guards had to restrain John Wayne, who tried to hit her. We wanted to highlight this because it's way more interesting than what happened between Will Smith and Chris Rock, people. The FBI confronted AIM through public defamation and siege. There were shootings, which wounded and killed several protesters, and activist Ray Robinson disappeared. The occupation lasted 71 days, after which peace was negotiated at the behest of Lakota elders. Wilson remained in power, in one of the few displays of respect for Indian Sovereignty by the U.S. Government who said they could not remove an elected leader of an Indian nation.

Our play has an amazing climax at the Second Wounded Knee that causes time to completely collapse and reset. Really.