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Seminar Paper

In History 403, the main topic that we learned about and discussed was the Native American people, most of those that resided in the Great Lakes Region. It went from their home life, to how they came to a region or area, to how they governed themselves. Native Americans had their own culture and ways to do things that people had never seen or heard about before. The “white” people were mostly Europeans and they had their own ways of life also. The Native Americans lives would change forever with the white man-carving father and farther into their land, and into their way of life. The Native Americans would be forced off of their land and from the area, which they called home. Many left by choice, but not everyone left peacefully. This information is largely left out of mainstream schools history books. This class was a very informational and crucial to my father explaining and education of Native American culture to my future students.

I learned that Native Americans aren’t all the same; from tribe to tribe they all have differences just like people today are different from each other. Language was a huge difference; some were more similar than other. Another big difference is weather or not the natives hunted, or farmed for their main source of food. The tribes that hunted often moved camp or their tribe so that they wouldn’t over use or over hunt the area. If they would have stayed there too long they would have became hungry, and also the animals would have been at risk. Lucky for the Native American people was that when they hunted they could kill an animal and feed their people for months on end. Animals such as the buffalo or bison were such great big animals that when they killed one it was truly a blessing. The bison served many purposes for these people. Not only was it a great food source, but also they used every little bit possible. They made weapons, clothing, and shelter among other things with animals. Using every possible asset was a huge and important part of their culture.

The other side to hunting was farming. Most natives preferred to hunt; some natives saw farming as converting to the white mans way. The Native Americans that did farm would stay in the same spot for a while. They would stay because they had all their resources that they needed in order to survive. Many of the tribes grew wild rice, which grew along the river. They also grew corn, beans and other crops also.

The Native Americans did gain a little bit from the white people moving in, they just didn’t gain in the way you would expect. They traded with the white man for things such as guns, seeds, flower and many other things. This trading allowed the natives to hunt with a gun instead of a bow and arrow for the first time. This made hunting exponentially easier for them, it also made warfare much easier and less bloody. They no longer had to sneak up very close were they would have hand to hand combat, now they could sit back and pick whomever off from a distance. The Native Americans also traded for horses, this surprised me as I thought that they would have had wild horses before hand. Having horses made hunting, gathering, farming, warfare, and transpiration much more convenient for the people.

The removal of Native Americans from their homes made for an ugly and sad site. There had been many wars and treaties, but those treaties weren’t always honored like they should have been. The up rise of the Native American people was mostly blamed on themselves. When in fact the blame shouldn’t rest all on their shoulders. People need to realized that this was a two way street. Yes, they did take action but in my opinion their hand was almost forced by the white man. In class we were asked if we thought that this was an act of genocide. I could see both sides of the argument, but from my standpoint I don’t think that the Native American people said hey lets go out and kill everyone that’s white. Instead they wanted to protect what had been in their families and tribes for years. They just wanted to drive people back off of their land and live the way they know how. The Native Americans did do some horrible things to people, but there were also stories of how they saved people also, you just don’t ever hear the latter very often.

The most commonly discussed tribes in class were the Chippewa ( Ojibwe) and the Dakota Sioux. Both of who lived in Minnesota. The name Sioux means little snake, other warriors gave this nickname to them. Other tribes and white people did not want to mess with them at all. They were great warriors; they also were a tribe of hunting. They roamed free to hunt and gather. The Ojibwe on the other hand was a community of farming. They didn’t move around much at all, a huge crop for them was their wild rice.

In my future classroom I know I would like to tell the real truth of the Native American people to my class. It is very important that they actually hear the truth, instead of just making accusations and assumptions just because they were different than us. I believe that everyone should know some history, especially when this history shaped and formed the place that they live around now.