Metropolitan State University of Denver
Journey Through Our Heritage Program:
Colorado’s First Indigenous Nations, the Sand Creek Massacre, and Migration.

Index:

Colorado’s First Indigenous Nations
The Sand Creek Massacre
Migration in Colorado
Colorado’s First Indigenous Nations

**Ute Nation**

Currently there are only two federally recognized indigenous tribes in Colorado, the Southern Ute Tribe and the Ute Mountain Ute Tribe. However, there are other tribes that have also been inhabitants in the state and the region long before the Spanish, French, and United States invaded their territories. Those tribes include the Apache, Arapahoe, Bannock, Caddo, Cheyenne, Comanche, Crow, Hopi, Jicarilla, Kiowa, Kiowa-Apache, Kaibab, Navajo, Nez Pierce, Pueblo, Sioux, Shoshone, Ouray, Paiute and other Ute tribes. According to Archeological research studies that have been conducted on indigenous groups in Colorado it has been found that the Ute Nation inhabited the Rocky Mountains and plains of what is now considered to be Colorado thousands of years ago. The Ute Nation settled in the region anywhere between 8,000 to 20,000 years ago occupying the entire central and western portions of Colorado reaching as far north as Wyoming and as far south as what we now call the four corners that divide Arizona, New Mexico, Utah, and Colorado.

Forensic evidence supports the Ute Nation as the oldest continuous residents of Colorado, the present day Ute Nation consists of four groups two of which reside in Colorado and two others that live in Utah. The Southern Ute live on the Reservation near Ignacio in the Southwest Corner of Colorado and the Mountain Ute live on the Western end of the Southern Ute Reservation near Towaoc Colorado. Named after the state of Utah the Northern Ute live on the Uintah-Ouray Reservation in Utah and there is also the White Mesa Utes who reside in Blanding, Utah. Known as the shining mountain people the Ute consider themselves to be born in the Rocky Mountain region and have no migration story in the United States, they are the last indigenous nation in the west to be confined to reservations. The Ute Nation is believed to be one of the first groups in North America to use horses in great numbers the acquisition of horses from the Spanish in the early 1600s dramatically changed the Ute lifestyle, evolving them from a small hunting-and-gathering family and economy to an organized tribal society. Among the Ute people, the horse became a man’s most important possession, not only
for hunting and raiding, but as a symbol of wealth and success. The Ute nation became skilled horsemen, developing their raiding and fighting abilities as the Comanche, Arapahoe, and Cheyenne tribes began migrating into Ute country in the 1700s. Although war was not a part of their culture, the Utes defended their vast territories from other migrating tribes and white homesteaders. With the help of horses for transportation, this tribe was able to have hunting parties that could travel long distances seeking buffalo, elk, deer, antelope, and mountain sheep. These animals served as sources of food, clothing, teepee (or tipi) hides, and bone implements. The groups would gather together after their hunt at the Garden of the Gods along the Front Range of the Rocky Mountains using grinding stones to complete the tanning of hides and processing of meats. Friendly interactions with European settlers allowed the Utes to trade their finely-tanned hides for guns, knives, axes, iron kettles, wool, cloth, and beads.

The nomadic Ute tribes followed a distinct seasonal pattern of hunting and gathering, along with ceremonies designed to ensure successful hunting season as well as maintaining their connection and harmony with mother earth. They would spend winters in protected mountain valleys where they spent their time in warm teepees.
sewing, crafting tools, playing games, and telling stories. With the arrival of spring the Ute gathered to participate in an ancient ceremonial celebration, the she bear dance is a dance still being performed today to honor and celebrate spring. Summers were spent in the mountains gathering fruits, grain and other resources needed to survive the harsh Rocky Mountain winters. During the fall several bands would join together and travel through the Ute Pass Trail, where they made offerings to the spirits of the springs for good health and a good hunting season before continuing east in search of buffalo. El Paso (Spanish for “the pass”) County was named the Ute Pass Trail because the trail was made into a wide road by migrating Native Americans who traveled with horses and dragged their teepee poles along the road. After the migration of the Ute tribe this same road was followed by mountain men, explorers, prospectors, freight wagons, and the Colorado Midland Railroad, and is now the route of a modern highway (U.S. 24). Under the leadership of Chief Ouray the Utes remained friendly to the new settlers, the Spanish conquistadores and European homesteaders.

After the U.S. government invaded Ute territories many broken treaties soon followed, confining the nation to disproportionality smaller reservations. Often, tribes endured starvation because of the loss of precious hunting and gathering grounds and the lack of food and within their limited hunting radius. In 1879 broken provisions promised by the treaties led a small group of Utes to revolt in retaliation against the United States for the negative treatment against their nation. The revolt has become to be known as the “Meeker Massacre” in northwestern Colorado and as a result of this incident all Utes were confined on reservations by 1882. They were not allowed to return to the Pikes Peak area until 1911, after this time a group of Southern Utes were escorted to Colorado Springs to participate in a carnival. At this carnival the Ute mountain tribe rode down the Ute Pass to dance and camp in the Garden of the Gods, where their leader Chief Buckskin Charlie was born. In 1912 the Ute Pass Trail was formally dedicated to the Ute tribe in a ceremony where several notable Utes rode down the Trail for the last time. Presently the majority of Ute people still reside on reservations in southwestern Colorado and eastern Utah. Their largest reservation is in Utah, The Colorado Springs Pioneers Museum has a fine collection of Ute items, including clothing, cradleboards, and baskets.
Another early native tribe that resided in Colorado was the Apache tribe, a number of the Apache tribes extended their raids over the Colorado territory but only one of the Apache tribes named the Jicarilla is said to have been permanent occupants of Colorado. The word “Jicarilla” is a Spanish word that means “little basket,” and was given to the tribe because the Jicarilla Apache women were skilled basket makers. The Jicarilla were a part of the Apache tribes and belonged to the great linguistic stock and constituted a distinct group of Apache. The homes of the Jicarilla tribe have been in southeastern Colorado and northern New Mexico, though they have also resided in parts of Kansas, Oklahoma, and Texas. Many historians believe that the Jicarilla traveled southward and intermingled with the Athapascan tribes in northwestern Canada because of the eastern flanks of the Rocky Mountains. Historians also believe that the Jicarilla tribe were among the people who were met by Coronado in 1540-42, the same people known to later Spanish explorers as Vaqueros. The Jicarilla tribe called themselves Vaqueros early in the 18th century. Even though many think of the Spanish and indigenous relations as peaceful, however, the Jicarilla relations with the Spaniards were generally hostile.

In 1872 and 1873 attempts were made to move the Jicarilla tribe to Fort Stanton, but most of them were permitted to go to the Tierra Amarilla, on a reservation that expanded 900 square miles, which was set aside for the tribe in 1874. In 1878 the tribe’s annuities were suspended because they refused to move southward and did not comply with the Act of 1878, which Congress implemented that year. In 1880 the Act of 1878 was repealed, and a new reservation was set aside on the Navajo River, to which they were relocated. Here the Jicarilla tribe remained until 1883, when they were
transferred again to Fort Stanton. However, on February 11, 1887, a reservation was set aside for the Jicarilla tribe in the Tierra Amarilla region by Executive Order.

The Arapaho tribe was another early Native American tribe that resided in Colorado. The Arapaho hunted and warred over parts of eastern Colorado. This tribe and the Shoshoni roamed over the extreme northwestern corner of the State. Like the Arapaho, the Cheyenne tribe also hunted and warred in the eastern parts of Colorado. Like the Arapaho, Cheyenne, and Comanche, the Kiowa formerly hunted and warred across parts of eastern Colorado. The Kiowa Apache tribe always accompanied the Kiowa. The Navaho lived just south of the Colorado boundary, and occasionally entered the state. Shoshoni tribe along with the Bannock roamed over the extreme northwestern part of Colorado.

Most of the Pueblo tribes traced their origin in the north but the ancestors of many of them lived in what is now Pueblo, Colorado. Many early native tribes that lived in the Pueblo of Taos, Colorado, which was once a trading point of importance for these tribes. Many of the pueblo tribes intermarried with the Ute tribe. Many descendants of these tribes still call Colorado home. And a few times a year they get together and put on re-enactments of happier times in their history.

The Sand Creek Massacre

The worst crime against Native Americans in Colorado was the Sand Creek Massacre. The Sand Creek Massacre was a tragic event that made many tribes
mistrust the European settlers and impaired there relations with them. This contributed to the many years of warfare. At this time, Europeans kept pushing Native Americans into less desirable lands and tribes grew intolerant to this unjust cause. This lead tribes to raid many European settlements which created tension between the white settlers and the Native Americans. According to the 1851 treaty, the Sand Creek land was promised to the Cheyenne’s and because of this many Cheyenne's, and a few Arapahos, believed to be protected. After the assurance of peace at the Camp Weld Conference, Cheyenne and Arapaho peace chiefs resided in Fort Lyon on October 1864. The Cheyenne Peace Chief, Black Kettle, went to the United States Army fort to seek protection for the village. On November 28, 1864, he was assured that his people would not be disturbed at Sand Creek because the territory had been promised to them. Despite the tribes intentions to bring about peace, on November 29, 1864, the U.S. Army soldiers attacked the camp. Colonel John Chivington led 700 troops to provoke an attack on the peaceful Cheyenne and Arapaho villagers at Sand Creek. Black kettle and other leaders at the Sand Creek camp and indicated their peaceful intent by waving the U.S flag. Of the seven-hundred people who lived in the village, about 200 of the Native Americans were killed, mutilated, and scalped and two-thirds of those were women and children. Many of the other natives retreated into the surrounding wilderness to hide from their attackers.

After this tragic and unnecessary incident, Colonel John Chivington paraded the body parts of dead Cheyenne and Arapaho people through the streets of Denver as a way to boast his victory. Pregnant women were murdered and scalped and their genitalia were paraded as trophies. Few Army officers dared to report the horrid things that took place that
day. One officer that did report was Captain Silas Soule, and he had been with Black Kettle and other Cheyenne leaders during the peace negotiation with Governor John Evens of Colorado, who was also the superintendent of Indian affairs. Evans and Chivington were forced to resign from their appointments. But neither faced criminal charges, and the government refused to compensate the victims or their families in any way. However, Soule brave attempt to bring the incident to light exposed Chivington for the murder he was and as a result he was later murdered in Denver.

The Peace Chief, Black Kettle, miraculously escaped harm at the Sand Creek Massacre, even when he returned to rescue his seriously injured wife. Even after the massacre, he continued to counsel peace when the Cheyenne attempted to strike back with isolated raids on wagon trains and nearby ranches. Sand Creek was a territory that had hardly any white communities during the 1850’s, but by 1870 many Native Americans were killed and pushed violently off the Great Plains by white settlers and the federal government. What happened at Sand Creek would be considered an ‘ethnic cleansing’ because the colonial settlers wiped out an entire population through genocide and this is a crime against humanity. This was a gruesome act of violence against the indigenous people. These peaceful people had no choice but to fight to protect their land that was being taken from them. So many atrocities were committed against these noble people and all they wanted to do was live in peace.

Many are not aware that the Civil War created campaigns against Native Americans and the war made such violence possible. Before the war, the Union Army of 1858, could not have attacked, let alone removed, the Navajo communities in the Four Corners. However southern secession gave Americans a powerful hand over territory westward. Territorial leaders like Evans were given more resources and power to negotiate with and fight against powerful Western tribes like the Shoshone, Cheyenne, Lakota and Comanche. The violence of this time was fueled by the greed for power by civilian and military leaders desperate to obtain glory and wartime recognition. Land expansion continued after the war with the boost of the American economy but also by the new spirit of nationalism. This sense of nationalism was prominent in the United States and because of this Americans believe that they had the right to conquer more
peoples and territories. The United States to this day does not acknowledge the violence and destruction inflicted upon the indigenous peoples by the Civil War and the Union Army. Connor and Evans have cities, monuments and plaques in their honor, as well as two universities and even Colorado's Mount Evans, home to the highest paved road in North America. Few Americans know of the violence of this time, let alone the subsequent violation of Indian treaties, of reservation boundaries and of Indian families by government actions, including the half-century of forced removal of Indian children to boarding schools. One symbolic but necessary first step would be a National Day of Indigenous Remembrance and Survival, perhaps on Nov. 29, the anniversary of Sand Creek. Another would be commemorative memorials, not only in Denver and Evanston but in Washington, too. We commemorate "discovery" and "expansion" with Columbus Day and the Gateway arch, but nowhere is there national recognition of the people who suffered from those "achievements" — and have survived amid continuing cycles of colonialism.

http://www.explore-old-west-colorado.com/colorado-native-americans.html
http://www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~conamer/
http://www.explore-old-west-colorado.com/colorado-native-americans.html
http://www.ushistory.org/us/40a.asp

Colorado

Significance: Colorado has a unique history when it comes to immigrants. Colorado’s history regarding new immigrants is complicated because immigrant labor was eagerly welcomed in many areas while strongly opposed in others. Then in the 1900’s the state government took a strong anti-immigrant position, despite having depended upon migrant workers to generate local revenue in many of the agricultural areas in the past. During the 1920’s, it sought to reduce or eliminate foreign immigration into the state. However, by the late twentieth century, the state had become dependent on its substantial Hispanic population for labor, and its Hispanic leaders were making a dramatic impact both on Colorado and throughout the United States.
Late Nineteenth Century Immigration

Even before Colorado became a state in 1876, waves of new settlers and immigrants peppered its plains, foothills, and mountains in search of fortune, employment, or simply arable farmland. Even as the state’s first railroads were nearing completion during the 1880’s, new settlers and miners were already living in Colorado. Many of them had come during the 1859 Pikes Peak gold rush and the formal annexation of the Rocky Mountain region into the United States. By 1880, Colorado had a population of nearly 200,000 people, who included, with sizeable numbers of Scandinavians, Irish and Scots working in the mining, railroad, or farming, industries. The discovery of silver in 1879 in Leadville continued to draw speculators and miners into the region.

The expansion of coal mining throughout the Colorado basin encouraged new waves of immigrants to move to the state. The exhausting and dangerous work of extracting coal from open-pit mines was often the only employment available to immigrants with limited education and limited access to working capital. Many immigrants from Italy, Germany, and Russia were hired to replace striking workers through the numerous violent clashes that erupted during Colorado’s labor wars, during the first decade of the twentieth century.

(Resource)

Twentieth Century Arrivals

Immigration into the region was slowed during the early part of the twentieth century as numerous groups protested and demonstrated against new arrivals into the state. During the early 1920’s, the Ku Klux Klan possessed considerable political clout and targeted immigrants, African Americans, and Roman Catholics through intimidation and violence. The Klan reached the peak of its influence in Colorado in 1924, with the election of Klansman Clarence Morely as the state’s governor. Throughout cities such as Denver, Pueblo, Canyon City, and Grand Junction, the organization sought to intimidate followers of the Roman Catholic Church, especially those of Italian descent.

http://immigrationinamerica.org/442-colorado.html
Colorado Migration- Questions (with answers)

1. Who were the “first Coloradans”?
   a. Spanish
   b. Ute Tribes
   c. Aztecs
   d. Apache

2. In southern Colorado, the Ute and Apaches paired up with the Spanish to maintain their land.
   a. True
   b. False

3. What were the goals of the Spanish?
   a. To settle down with their families and create agricultural colonies.
   b. To buy and sell land for profit
   c. To find gold, silver and souls for religious conversion
   d. To make friends with the natives

4. Who gained power in the 1700’s over Southern Colorado?
   a. The Comanche Nation
   b. The Republic Of Mexico
   c. Spanish Conquistadors
   d. French Explorers

5. What Native American land is Denver located in during the mid-1800s?
   a. The Black Foot
   b. Cheyenne’s and Arapahos
   c. Apache
6. Who were Colorado’s first permanent settlers?
   a. People from Mexico
   b. The Spanish
   c. Aliens
   d. Apache Natives

7. Which Colorado Governor proposed the deportation of all Mexican Immigrants during the Great Depression?
   a. Bennett Mansfield
   b. Douglas Drew
   c. John Hickenlooper
   d. Edwin Johnson

8. Fill in the blank: ____________________________ was considered ‘The Borderlands’.
   a. Southern Colorado

9. Finish the phrase: “I didn’t cross the border, the . . .

   ________________________________”
   i. the border crossed me

10. What were the 9 main defenders and contenders for Colorado land?
    a. Apaches, Comanche’s, Cheyenne’s, Utes, Spanish, French, Mexico, Republic Of Texas, United States

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3. 


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