



## American Indian and Alaskan Native Documents in the Congressional Serial Set : 1817-1899

### HOW TO USE THE *CONGRESSIONAL SERIAL SET: 1817 – 1899* WEBSITE TO RESEARCH TRIBAL HISTORY

The *Serial Set* is a compilation of U.S. Congressional publications that have been published by either the U.S. Senate or U.S. House of Representatives. It consists of reports and documents of Senate and House committees about the bills and resolutions involved in lawmaking, reports and documents from federal agencies, and a few documents from state legislatures. There are 10,649 titles in this bibliography; this website contains 7,653 of these titles. When users access this online collection in our website *American Indian and Alaska Native Documents in the Congressional Serial Set: 1817 -1899* at <https://digitalcommons.law.ou.edu/indianserialset/> they need to know that the subject headings are those of Steven L. Johnson's *GUIDE TO AMERICAN INDIAN DOCUMENTS IN THE CONGRESSIONAL SERIAL SET: 1817 – 1899* (1977) and were taken directly from the historical documents that this guide indexes. These subject headings reflect how Congress viewed relations between the Indian Nations and the U.S. government. Users need to know how these subject headings might differ from how we would assign subject headings to these documents today. The following subject headings may not exist for every tribe, and some tribes will have additional headings. These subject headings are an amalgamation of subject headings gathered from many of the tribes; no one tribe will have all of these subject headings –

Agreements –can also include names of specific agreements

Allotment

Annuities

## Citizenship

Claims [claims against a tribe] – asks Congress for money because the filer or their next of kin fought against Indians and/or lost property or life during those actions.

Claims of [claims of a tribe] – asks Congress for money because a tribe or individual Indians suffered because of actions of U.S. Infantry and other federal military forces, or state militias and other local forces.

Commissions – includes the Dawes Commission whose work in Oklahoma dissolved its reservations (except for the Osage Nation), and the Indian Peace, Northern Boundary, Northwest Indian, and Sitting Bull Commissions.

## Condition

Councils – these are councils within a tribe; example: “Cheyenne Indians – Councils”

Depredations and Hostilities – when Indians defended their lands this is the subject heading that Congress usually used in their Serial Set documents and reports.

Education – this is the government’s attempts to educate Indians as white men and educate them away from being Indians at all, including sending them to boarding schools.

## Encounters with Expeditions

Freedmen – these are the ex-slaves of “the 5 Civilized Tribes” of Oklahoma, the Cherokee, Chickasaw, Choctaw, Muscogee Creek, and Seminole.

General Indian Council –this was a council made up of tribes in Oklahoma’s Indian Territory.

Indian Agencies – for this and the following subject heading of “Indian Agents” we often read in these documents about actions taken against these individuals or entities because they either stole or didn’t deliver money to tribes that were due by treaty to receive it.

## Indian Agents

## Lands

Mining Rights – white miners and settlers routinely invaded Indian lands whether those lands were protected by treaty or not. The California Gold Rush is an example of this.

## Prisoners of U.S.

Railroads – railroads were a major tool that divided reservations.

Removal – the United Nations defines “removal” as a tool of genocide: “ ‘Removal’ is understood as an attempt to inflict ‘...conditions of life calculated to bring about a groups destruction’ ”. All branches of the federal government and many state governments made removal legal.

## Reservations

Roads – roads were another tool that divided reservations.

## Service in Civil War

Service in Revolutionary War/Service in Civil War/Service in Seminole War

## Timber

Treaties - can also include names of specific treaties such as the “Treaty of 1830 (Dancing Rabbit Creek” and “Treaty of 1835 (New Echota)” – treaties can be legally questionable, such as the “Treaty of New Echota” which was a treaty with the Cherokees that wasn’t signed by tribal leaders, but by some tribal members.

## Trust Funds

Users need to know how these subject headings might differ from how we would assign subject headings to these documents today. The following notes derive from what I’ve learned while working with this website project. I’ve also included some general usage notes –

- Large tribes may have many subject headings, such as the Sioux who have 51; small tribes may have only one general subject heading that includes everything about them, such as the Adnochtan Indians, Biloxi Indians, Maricopa Indians, Suwanu Indians, and others.
- Because the borders of Indian Nations reach across national borders you will find entries for Canada and Mexico.
- Because the U.S. along with their Indian allies were engaged in several wars with Great Britain and France you will find subject headings for these nations.
- Some tribes and tribal groupings are grouped together, such as "Southeastern Indians," "Southwestern Indians," "Northwest Indians"/"Northwestern Indians," "New York Indians," "Western Indians" and "Texas Indians". You will also see that minor variations, such as "Northwest Indians" and "Northwestern Indians," which although differing from each other by only three letters, are indexed separately.
- You will encounter different spellings from current spellings for the names of tribes. Examples: one current spelling is "Pottawatomie" but Johnson uses "Potawatomi"; the current Kaw Nation is "Kansa" in Johnson. If you don't know the variant spellings or names for an Indian Nation you should research the name at that Indian Nation's website, Wikipedia, or other Internet sources.
- The subject heading of "Mission Indians" refers only to Indians in California who were attached to missions. These were Indians who were attached to a mission at birth by the government of Spain. They were conscripted into forced labor and religious conversion and their tribal traditions and religions were forbidden. When Mexico gained its independence in 1834 it took over the operations of these missions with no changes. When the U.S. assumed control of California in created a tribal geography still in existence known as "Rancherias" as a component of our nation's reservation system.
- The subject heading of "Christian Indians" refers to tribes that Congress considered wholly or predominately Christian. This reflects wishful thinking by some members of Congress at that time.
- You'll see these two major subdivisions of subject headings for tribes: "Claims" and "Claims by". These are very different: "Claims" were usually claims filed by individuals or groups of individuals for compensation because they had fought against Indian tribes of behalf of the United States or individual states; such requests are also found in the subject heading of "Pensions". "Claims by" were claims filed by tribes against the U.S. or state governments for damages done to tribes. Both subject headings contain many names, and can be used for researching tribal histories or individual genealogies. There are also two variations of these subject headings: "Claims and Pensions" and "Pensions".
- Looking for names? You will find major historical figures such as Crazy Horse, Geronimo, Sitting Bull, General George Armstrong Custer, Andrew Jackson, Henry Schoolcraft, George Catlin, Seth Eastman, and John Fremont; other people such as William Henry Holmes, Walter P. Jenny, and Nelson Appleton Miles. There are many more names of people in in "Claims" as noted above; it is best to use keyword searching to find them for either genealogical research or tribal history.
- "Battles" list major engagements. "Massacres" list victories by Indian tribes, such as Little Big Horn, but also massacres by U.S. troops, such as the massacre of mostly women and children by U.S. troops at Wounded Knee, South Dakota and Sand Creek, Colorado.
- Engagements by Indian Nations against white settlers use the phrase "Depredations and Hostilities," such as "Sioux Indians – Depredations and Hostilities" or "Kansas – Depredations and Hostilities". For Indian Territory you will see both "Indian Territory – Depredations and

Hostilities” and the additional category of “Crimes and Disorders”. You will also see “Mexico – Depredations and Hostilities” and “Canada – Depredations and Hostilities”. Engagements by the U.S. military against tribes can be listed as “Claims – Depredations by U.S. Troops”. There are many claims by tribes against tribes, but many fewer claims by tribes against the U.S. or state governments.

- You will see subject headings for both the national-level “Commissioner of Indian Affairs” and the local “Superintendents of Indian Affairs” for states or groups of states such as Florida, Montana, New Mexico, and “Central,” “Northern,” and “Southern”.
- Expeditions are indexed and listed as “Expeditions”.  
Forts are indexed and listed as “Military Posts”.  
Indian Agencies are indexed and listed as “Indian Agencies”.  
Railroads are indexed and listed as “Railroads”.  
Reservations are indexed and listed as “Reservations”.  
Pueblos are indexed by name, such as Nambe Pueblo and Santa Ana Pueblo. There is also a subject heading for “Pueblo Indians” and additional materials in “New Mexico”.  
Some subjects important in the development of Indian law are “Blood Indians,” “Citizenship, U.S.,” “Education and Civilization,” “Indian, Defined,” and “Indian Country, Defined”.
- There are more documents, and more precise documentation, about American Indians in the lower 48 states than there are about Alaskan Natives and Aleutian Islanders.
- You will not find subject headings for the Taino tribe in Puerto Rico; there are no entries for “Puerto Rico”.
- **For all of the above reasons you should always supplement a search that uses subject headings with a keyword search.**
- Federal agencies some of whose publications are in the Serial Set include: the U.S. Bureau of American Ethnology, the U.S. Department of the Interior, and the Secretary of the Interior, with the Office of Indian Affairs being indexed as “Indian Department”; the Smithsonian Institution and National Museum; the Treasury Department and Secretary of the Treasury; the U.S. Board of Indian Commissioners and U.S. Indian Commission; the U.S. Geological Survey; and the U.S. Department of War and Secretary of War.
- The “Annual Messages” of the President of the United States are indexed in “President of the United States” under “Annual Messages” and “State of the Union”. This document includes reports for all the Executive Branch agencies that were involved in American Indian and Alaskan Native affairs from 1817 through 1898.
- Abbreviations that this guide and website use follow. *You will need to remember these and use them when needed.* Some abbreviations you can guess, such as “HD” for House Document or “Pres” for President. But other abbreviations you may have to look up. **Remember that “CIA” here means “Commissioner of Indian Affairs”.**

There are two sets of abbreviations that relate to claims, the “L’s” and the “R’s”. Examples:

L-C is “Letter on the Claim”

L-M is “Letter on the Memorial”

R-C is “Report on the Claim”

R-M is “Report on the Memorial”

R-P is “Report on the Petition”

BIA – Bureau of Indian Affairs  
C – Congress  
CIA – Commissioner of Indian Affairs  
co. – company  
Col. – Colonel  
comm. – committee  
com’r – commissioner  
dept. – department  
Gen. - General  
HD – House Document  
HED – House Executive Document  
HMD – House Miscellaneous Document  
HR – House Report  
HRCC – House Report: court of claims  
L-C – Letter on the claim  
Legis. – legislature  
L-M – Letter on the memorial  
Maj. – Major  
Mem. – Memorial  
no. – number  
p. – page  
Pres. – President  
pt.- part  
R-C – Report on the claim  
Rep. – Representative  
Resol. – Resolution  
R-M – Report on the memorial  
R-P – Report on the petition  
SD – Senate Document  
Sec. – Secretary  
SED – Senate Executive Document  
Sen. – Senator  
Sess. – Session  
SMD – Senate Miscellaneous Document  
SR – Senate Report  
Suppl. – Supplement

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Marilyn K Nicely, Artist, feather overlaid upon daguerrotype of east side of the Capitol in 1846,  
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