

Historical and Current Impacts of Trade on Indigenous Groups in North America

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This paper reviews much of the discussion of the impact of trade on North American indigenous peoples, couched in a substantially historical context. The question of impact did not begin with the North American Free Trade Agreement, but with the arrival of the first Europeans settling in the North America. From furs to gold, the extractive orientation of European contact with indigenous North Americans shaped, in a significant fashion, the nature of social relationships, settlement patterns, resource exploitation, and a host of other factors. Indeed, the perspective voiced by some indigenous groups during the remembrance of Columbus' 1492 arrival in the Western Hemisphere..."500 years of resistance"...reminds us that the perspective of the original inhabitants reflects a recurring history of conflict and repression. One does not have to be a Marxist economic historian to recognize that this contact has carried a weight that defines the resource and trade opportunities available even today.