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The major cause of conflict in colonizing North America came in taking the land from the Natives that lived there. Often the conflict erupted into violence as the native tribes fought against colonial encroachment. There were three major revolts in the colonial time period that were desperate, organized attempts to drive the settlers off of tribal land. These revolts were hindered by lack of unity, technological inferiority, and numerical disadvantages but they left a distinct impression on the colonial mindset and inspired later uprisings.

One of the earliest revolts was King Philips War, organized by Pometacom, known to European contemporaries as King Philip, a Wampanoag chief. In 1675 Pometacom led a coalition of Massachusetts tribes against the colonists. The coalition fell apart because Philip's allies were weak and uncertain, and two tribes, the Narragansett and the Mohegan, would not fight the colonists at first. Before Philip was hunted down, his forces attacked half of the settlement towns, destroying 13 of them and fighting the colonists all the way to the beach in some areas. The war shattered New England resistance to colonial migration but cost the lives of one hundredth, compared to the World War II ratio of two thousandths, the population of the New England colonies and more on the Native's side. The Narragansett were all but exterminated in The Great Swamp Fight by the colonists who feared betrayal, and Philip's head was displayed on a pole in Plymouth.

Philip's weakness lay in his failure to enlist two powerful tribes into the coalition before it was too late. The Narragansett joined King Philip after Great Swamp when their

forces had been decimated. The Mohawk, traditionally hostile to the Wampanoag, did not join but fought in the Iroquois wars years later. Many of the “praying Indians,” those that had converted to Christianity, served as scouts to the colonists and helped undermine Philip’s base of support. Of the 20,000 Natives estimated to have lived in the area at the time, over 3,000 lost their lives compared to 800 of an estimated 52,000 colonists. Such a disparity of losses was the result of a shortage of guns on Philip’s side, and the inexperience at conquering towns, a measure Europeans were experienced at. Philip was seen as a martyr to many other tribes and his revolt served as an inspiration to further fights for land. Philip’s Rebellion convinced many settlers that only force could keep the Indians from what they saw as God’s gift to the white man. Indian persecution increased to the point of genocide in many cases. Today there are only a few hundred of the hundreds of thousands that lived on the East Coast.

Earlier in the colonial era, in the future state of New Mexico, the Acoma overthrew the Spanish authority of priests, tossing them off of their mesa. In December of 1598, a force of 30 under Juan de Zaldivar was attacked by 1000 warriors that killed all but four soldiers that escaped to bring a bigger force back to Acoma. In January of 1599, Acoma fell under a frontal assault by Vicente de Zaldivar, the brother of Juan with a command of 70 soldiers. Fighting was street by street, house by house. Several soldiers scaled the steep mesa and attacked the warriors from behind. Eventually Acoma was overtaken. Men over 25 had a foot cut off. Men under 25 were sentenced to 20 years of slavery. Women were also sentenced to 20 years of slavery.

Although barely lasting a month, the Acoma revolt inspired the Pueblo revolt nearly a hundred years later. A secret alliance of 22 pueblos launched an attack on

Spanish settlements taking Santa Fe and driving the settlers back into Mexico. This alliance lasted 12 years until infighting allowed the Spanish government to re-establish bases in the 1690's.

These two incidents underline the severe divisions that plagued revolting tribes. 70 soldiers retook Acoma, a city of over 2500, with only the edge of guns and armor. Technology allowed Europeans to take the continent. After the Natives had learned the use of guns and had obtained them in large numbers more successful revolts were possible. However political and social divisions among the Pueblo and those that emulated them still hindered the forging and continuation of such alliances. For example the Apache could never unite with other nomadic tribes and were driven off by the United States Army.

Perhaps the farthest reaching effort was Pontiac's War in 1763. Enlisting the help on practically every Indian nation from Michigan to the lower Mississippi, Pontiac arranged for each group to attack the nearest fort and then combine to wipe out any settlements. Pontiac himself elected to take Detroit. His genius was in uniting the various tribes in a way that kept them separate and independent. He wanted to drive off the English having had a good relationship with the French before the Seven Years War forced the French from what would become the United States. With the remnants of the French colonists in his conspiracy, Pontiac wished a return of the trade and economic status that the western tribes had enjoyed with the French. Pontiac failed to take Detroit but his conspiracy took 8 forts and left large stretches of frontier settlements desolate. By this time there were too many settlers for the Natives to repel and Pontiac signed a peace treaty in 1766. He was killed in 1769 by a Peoria Indian that had been bribed. The

incident touched off a short and vicious struggle between his supporters that nearly annihilated the Peoria tribe.

By the time the Native Americans had recovered enough from the disease that heralded the onslaught of the Europeans, the technological culture shock, and the traditional rivalries between tribes to launch a counter attack, the colonies were too large to be driven off. Further divisions kept the remaining tribes from uniting into a nation that the settlers understood. Currently the battles are being fought in the courts. Entire tribes have been reduced to a handful of individuals. Racism, discrimination, and health problems continue to plague the last few groups.

Pontiac was, arguably, the last chance for Native Americans to drive off encroaching colonists, or at least to confine them to east of the Appalachians. After the American Revolution, revolts continued but had to contend against a nation of settlers that would not relent on their vision of manifest destiny.

Spicer, Edward H. A Short History of the Indians of the United States D. Van Nostrand Co. 1969

Encyclopedia Britannica "Pontiac". Britannica Co. 1994

[http://www.epcc.edu/ftp/Homes/monicaw/borderlands/17\\_pueblo\\_revolt.htm](http://www.epcc.edu/ftp/Homes/monicaw/borderlands/17_pueblo_revolt.htm)

<http://www.geocities.com/Heartland/Hills/1094/king.htm>