

Photo in Historic Trauma Segment of the Curriculum:

In 1944, Congress enacted the Flood Control Act (also known as the Pick Sloan Act) to construct a series of dams, including the Garrison Dam, along the Missouri River to control the waters flowing through the Missouri River Basin. The Missouri River is home to a number of Indian tribes, including the Mandan, Hidatsa and Arikara nations who are collectively known the Three Affiliated Tribes.

The Missouri River is the heart of the Three Tribes' homelands. Traditionally expert agriculturalists, the tribes relied on the fertile river bottomlands for subsistence farming along with buffalo hunting and trade. The Three Tribes adamantly opposed construction of Garrison Dam; they understood damming the Missouri would have grave consequences for the people. Despite their opposition, Congress intended for the construction to move forward. The Tribes made a number of proposals to Congress they considered to be fair compensation for the taking of their land, but Congress refused all. In the end, the tribes were forced to accept approximately \$5.1 million for the 155,000 acres of the Three Tribes' heartland.

After its construction Garrison Dam flooded nine communities situated in the area now covered by Lake Sakakawea. Within these communities were schools, government buildings, parks, churches, cemeteries and a hospital. Eighty percent of the tribes' population was forcibly relocated to lands on higher ground. Almost immediately the physical health and economy of the Tribes' was negatively impacted, as was culture and identity derived from the relationship with the river. Many moved away from the reservation in the aftermath. *(For more information on the negative impacts of Garrison Dam on the Three Tribes, see <http://www.hcn.org/issues/43.8/three-tribes-a-dam-and-a-diabetes-epidemic>).*

The photo is of Three Affiliated Tribes' chairman George Gillette witnessing the Secretary of the Interior signing the agreement of the Three Tribes to "sell" 155,000 acres of land to the United States. The tribes knew the loss of this land would be devastating but had no choice other than to sign the agreement. Chairman Gillette said, "You will excuse me if I say that the members of the tribal council will sign this contract with heavy hearts. With a few scratches of the pen, we will sell the best part of the reservation. Right now the future does not look too good for us." This is the second of two major events for these tribes that resulted in historic trauma.

By Kim Mettler