

John Collier and the Indian New Deal

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John Collier and the Indian New Deal

At the beginning of the 20th century, Native American culture was on the edge of extinction. Indians were at the bottom of the economic ladder. They had the lowest life expectancy rate, the highest infant mortality rate, the highest suicide rate and the highest rate of alcoholism than any other group in America. The Meriam Report of 1928, an 872-page study, laid the blame at the foot of the Federal Government. When President Franklin Delano Roosevelt took office 1933, a series of major reforms were implemented that would later come to be known as the "[Indian](#) New Deal". An important chapter in contemporary Native American history was about to begin. This essay will outline the major elements of the Indian New Deal and examine its achievements, failures and criticism.

A critical analysis of the Indian New Deal would not be complete without a brief history of its progenitor, John [Collier](#). His career started in 1907 as a social worker with the People's Institute in New York City. During his time with the institute, Collier developed a social ideology based on the preservation of cultural traditions and communal life. In 1920, he found himself among the Pueblo tribe of New Mexico. Collier became enchanted with their

sense of community, believing it to be an affirmation of his views on social policy. From this point on, he was at the forefront of the Indian reform movement. In 1923, Collier and other reformers founded the American Indian Defense Association, an organization committed to ending land allotment and preserving Native American culture. At the request of Secretary of Interior Harold L. Ickes, President Roosevelt selected Collier to oversee the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA). Immedia...

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