1860s
Increasing tensions along trails in pursuit of gold and land destroys tribal resources. Tensions and hostile contact increase as homesteading and railroad construction bring more intruders to American Indian lands.

1851
The Fort Laramie Treaty
Plains Indians accept the idea of assigned lands. Arapaho and Cheyenne agree to share land and the U.S. government promises 50 years of annual payments of supplies and money to compensate the tribes for damage to hunting grounds by travelers. Without tribal consent damage payments are reduced to 10 years.

1862
The Homestead Act
For a small fee any citizen with a family can claim 160 free acres and must live on it for five years to become owners. More than 1.6 million approved claims guarantee more intruders on American Indian hunting grounds as 420,000 square miles are settled.

1863
The Fort Bridger Treaty of 1863
On July 2, Eastern Shoshone band sign a treaty to create peace between Indians and whites. The Shoshone accept specific lands and 20 years of supplies and money payments of annuities. The treaty fails to protect the Shoshone from conflict.

1867
Senate Indian Committee report
The Senate Indian Committee issues a report that land loss, scarce game, whiskey, and disease are causing tribal population decline. They propose sending Indians to reservations to farm, and if this fails, sending the Army to handle Native American resistance.

1868
Fort Laramie Treaty of 1868
Lands promised tribes in Fort Laramie Treaty of 1851 are drastically reduced. Under threat of losing annuities, the Northern Arapaho reluctantly agree to three temporary options: settle with the Crow, the Lakota, or the Southern Cheyenne and receive a reservation later. All three options, however, prove untenable.

1868
Fort Bridger Treaty of 1868
On July 2, Shoshone bands sign the Fort Bridger Treaty—defining Shoshone lands reflecting the bands’ now traditional territories in Warm Valley or Wind River Basin. Bannocks will have a reservation in Idaho later.

1878
Northern Arapaho sent to Shoshone Reservation
The Northern Arapaho are escorted to the Shoshone Reservation by the military. They are promised land of their own, and told this arrangement is temporary. Now both tribes—enemies only a few years before—struggle to subsist on short rations and resist government pressure against their traditions.

1885
Buffalo herds decimated
60 million bison are indiscriminately slaughtered as a government policy to subdue the Indians—signaling the end of Indian hunting-based culture.

1924 & 1978
Citizenship & religious freedom
In 1924, the Indian Citizenship Act grants full citizenship to American Indians born in the U.S. Some states continue to deny them the right to vote. In 1978, the American Indian Religious Freedom Act provides constitutionally guaranteed freedoms not previously granted to American Indians.

1937
Shoshone reservation renamed the Wind River Indian Reservation
Supreme Court ruling allows compensation of $4.2 million to Eastern Shoshone for 61 years of Northern Arapaho presence on Shoshone Reservation. The order formalizes the rights of Arapaho to share the Wind River Indian Reservation as equals.

1928
Eastern Shoshone sue the government
The Shoshone sue the U.S. for breaking the Fort Bridger Treaty of 1868 by placing the Northern Arapaho on the Shoshone Reservation. The Shoshone argue that half of their reservation was taken and the government treated the Arapaho as rightful residents and owners by letting them share in Shoshone land sales and payments.

1997
Cultural heritage education
On May 8, the Wyoming State Legislature passes a bill requiring state schools social studies standards to include the cultural heritage, history, issues, and contributions of Indians. It also requires the Wyoming Department of Education to work with the tribes to develop curriculum.
Written vs. oral

Tribes traditionally pass down history through oral traditions while Euro-Americans place more trust in the written word.

Chasing gold & building railroads

The government steadily favors prospectors, railroad builders, and homesteaders over tribal interests.

Horses & guns

Nomadic pedestrian native culture is changed by innovations that transform travel, hunting, war, and relationships with others.

Assigned lands

In 1848, a U.S. government official first mentions “colonies” for Indian tribes—separate places where natives would be taught farming and be protected from the perceived vices of white people.

Climate of fear & violence

In 1824 the Bureau of Indian Affairs is added to the War Department, now the Department of Defense. Hostile attitudes toward dealings with Indians increase tensions as Euro-Americans move west.

Broken treaties

Treaties with other nations, including Indian nations, must be ratified once negotiated. Between 1778 and 1871, the government signs more than 600 treaties with Indian nations. Most were poorly enforced, broken, or remained unratified.

Ongoing themes

Arapahos

Compared to other tribes in the region, the migrations of the Arapahos are complex and not well understood. They subsequently established homesteads in the Wind River (Arapahos) and Laramie (Shoshones) areas of Wyoming. These agreements helped to reinforce tribal boundaries and encourage Shoshone settlement in Wyoming.

Horses & guns

Some tribes adopt new cultures to cope with innovation that transform travel, hunting, war, and relationships with others.

Chasing gold & building railroads

The government builds fences, prospectors seek gold, and homesteaders move into Indian lands.

Two tribes, one reservation

The Northern Arapaho and Eastern Shoshone were enemy tribes, often fighting over territory. Events outside of their control forced them to share the same reservation and learn to live together. Marriage between tribes is common. There are many families with a Shoshone and an Arapaho parent. Because most American Indian children are members of a single tribe, they cannot receive benefits unless both their mother and father are tribe members.

Shoshone

The Shoshone originated in the Great Basin of the interior West. As the first Native Americans in the region, they adapted their way of life to fit the environment and accommodate the early immigrant groups. They eventually moved north and east to the Great Basin and Wyoming. Because of their relatively sedentary lifestyle, Shoshone culture was less affected by European influences.

Arapaho

Compared to other tribes in the region, the migrations of the Arapahos are complex and not well understood. The Arapaho probably originated in northwestern Minnesota. They eventually moved into present-day Wyoming and eventually occupied a broad and ecologically diverse region from the Powder River Basin to the Arkansas River in central Colorado.

Chasing gold & building railroads

The government builds fences, prospectors seek gold, and homesteaders move into Indian lands.

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