

Abraham Lincoln as Great Father: A Look at Federal Indian Policy, 1861–1865
[Abstract]

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The Lincoln administration's Indian policies were, for the most part, consistent with those of his predecessors and shared many of the same goals. Lincoln and Commissioner of Indian Affairs William P. Dole supported assimilation, the allotment of Indian lands, the concentration of Native peoples on reservations, and the termination of federal responsibilities for Indian nations. While some Lincoln-era Indian policies were certainly well intentioned, they did irreparable damage to Native American societies and severely diminished the Indian land base. While exercising enlightened and steadfast leadership during the Civil War crisis, Lincoln's Indian policies cast an altogether different light on his presidency and help explain the ambiguity that many Native peoples feel about his tenure as Great Father.

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