

# PBS - THE WEST - White Man's Pipe

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## White Man's Pipe

Everything the Kiowas had came from the buffalo. Their tipis were made of buffalo hides, so were their clothes and moccasins. They ate buffalo meat.... Most of all, the buffalo was part of the Kiowa religion.... The buffalo were the life of the Kiowas.

Old Lady Horse

Of all the West's natural wonders, none surpassed the huge herds of buffalo that blanketed the Plains -- perhaps once as many as 30 million of them. They had frightened [Coronado's](#) horses by their smell, and astonished [Lewis](#) and [Clark](#) by their sheer numbers. One wagon train of pioneers was blocked for hours by a herd three miles wide and ten miles long. But for the native peoples of the Plains, they represented existence itself.

"The buffalo, which was the animal representation of the sun, was the sacrificial victim of the sundance. The Sun Dance was a great celebration, a great social occasion. And the Sun Dancers were expressing their spirit in order to gain certain power. They wanted to be victorious in war. They wanted to give thanks for something good that had come to them. A buffalo bull is sacrificed, and its head is impaled in the Sundance lodge or near it. And it's part of the ritual; you can't have a Sundance without the buffalo."

N. Scott Momaday

By the late 1860s, their numbers had already declined -- reduced by disease, competition from horse herds, and by the buffalo robe trade that encouraged some Indian bands to kill more than they needed.

And now the Union Pacific hired men to hunt buffalo to feed the hungry railroad crews as they built their iron road across Indian lands.

We saw the first train of cars that any of us had seen. We looked at it from a high ridge. Far off it was very small, but it kept coming and growing larger all the time, puffing out smoke and steam; and as it came on, we said to each other that it looked like a white man's pipe when he was smoking.

Porcupine

The Cheyenne and Arapaho and Lakota resented the railroad's intrusion. They de-railed trains, ransacked freight cars, fired on surveying crews. The Union Pacific fell behind schedule.

On June 26th, 1867, an Army detail was overtaken by a war party. One of those killed was Frederick Wyllyams who had come all the way from England in search of adventure. Another Englishman, an amateur ethnologist, photographed his countryman's corpse



**THE WEST**  
Episode Five (1868 - 1874)  
**THE GRANDEST ENTERPRISE UNDER GOD**



The muscles of the right arm, hacked to the bone, speak of the Cheyennes, or "Cut arms;" the nose slit denoted the "Smeller tribe," or Arapahos; and the throat cut bears witness that the Sioux were also present... it was evident, from the number of different devices, that warriors from several tribes had each purposely left one in the dead man's body.

Dr. William Bell

Finally, five thousand troops were sent west to provide the railroad workers with protection. The crews went back to work.

