



The Allegany Senecas and Kinzua Dam: Forced Relocation through Two Generations

Joy A. Bilharz

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In the late 1950s the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers announced its intention to construct a dam along the Allegheny River in Warren, Pennsylvania. The building of the Kinzua Dam was highly controversial because it flooded one-third of the Allegany Reservation of the Seneca Nation of Indians. Nearly six hundred Senecas were forced to abandon their homes and relocate, despite a 1794 treaty that had guaranteed them those lands in perpetuity.

In this revealing study, Joy A. Bilharz examines the short- and long-term consequences of the relocation of the Senecas. Granted unparalleled access to members of the Seneca Nation and reservation records, Bilharz traces the psychological, economic, cultural, and social effects over two generations. The loss of homes and tribal lands was heart wrenching and initially threatened to undermine the foundations of social life and subsistence economy for the Senecas. Over time, however, many Senecas have managed to adapt successfully to relocation, creating new social networks, invigorating their educational system, and becoming more politically involved on local, tribal, and national levels.



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