

Topic Page: [Pontiac's Conspiracy, 1763-1765](https://search.credoreference.com/content/topic/pontiac_s_conspiracy_1763_1765)

Definition: **Pontiac's Rebellion** from *Philip's Encyclopedia*

(1763-66) Native American rising against the British. Pontiac (d.1769) was an Ottawa chief who led a loose association of allies hostile to the British takeover of Québec (1760). A number of outposts in the Great Lakes region were overrun. News of the French withdrawal from North America fatally weakened the campaign, which soon collapsed.



Image from: [The Pontiac chief of Ottawa tribe lays siege to Fort Detroit in the spring of 1763, after an illustration by Frederic Remington \(litho\) in Bridgeman Images: Peter Newark American Pictures](#)

Summary Article: **Pontiac's Rebellion (1763–1766)**

From *Encyclopedia of United States Indian Policy and Law*

Pontiac's Rebellion reflected the anger and disillusionment of the Native tribes of the Great Lakes region and the Ohio valley following the British victory in the Seven Years' War (1756–1763). The French had treated the tribes with respect, trading with them fairly and engaging in proper diplomatic protocols such as gift-giving ceremonies. The British, in contrast, attempted to impose their will on the Indians and failed to accord them the appropriate diplomatic respect. Native dissatisfaction was manifested in physical and spiritual resistance.

The British victory in the French and Indian War (1754–1763) opened the floodgates to westward expansion. This, coupled with massive growth in British North America's white population—a 400 percent gain between 1700 and 1750 alone—put the Indians at an increasing disadvantage and subjected them to dubious practices that the British government proved either ineffective or uninterested in regulating. Tribes struggled to maintain their lands in the face of fraudulent deeds, corruption, and the nefarious practice of drawing tribes into debt that was then paid off through land sales.

The British North American governor-general, Jeffrey Amherst, put an end to the gift-giving ceremonies that had marked diplomatic relations in the past; in so doing, he effectively restricted the supply of blankets, tools, alcohol, and weapons on which many of the tribes had come to depend. British disregard for Native interests fostered resentment, as did government officials who increasingly dealt with “client” chiefs, overlooking the actual leaders of tribes and communities. British efforts to elevate individuals who would be more willing to work with them created factionalism within the tribal communities, as did missionary conversions of some Natives to Christianity.

As resentment against the British grew, Neolin, the Delaware Prophet, emerged with a message to reject contact with whites. His call was adopted by the Ottawa chief, Pontiac (c. 1720–1769). Pontiac's claims that the British sought Indian land and treated Indians discourteously proved popular among the nearby tribes. When rumors spread that the British might seek to enslave Indians, Pontiac called for unification of the tribes in the region to drive the British out of their territory.

On May 7, 1763, Pontiac led a group of warriors that laid siege to Fort Detroit. The siege lasted more than five months. At its peak in July a force of some nine hundred Indians surrounded the fort and defeated a group of British reinforcements at the Battle of Bloody Run. Indian forces also attacked

Fort Pitt and raided white settlements in Pennsylvania. During this time Amherst ordered that smallpox-infested blankets be delivered to the Indians who came to negotiate. While the attacks on Fort Detroit and Fort Pitt ultimately failed, the Indians successfully attacked nine smaller forts, which resulted in the deaths of over two hundred white traders and settlers.



After a period of growing tensions between Native Americans and British authorities and settlers, Ottawa chief Pontiac called on Indians in the Great Lakes region and Ohio valley to force the British from their territory. During 1763–1764, Pontiac led the siege against Fort Detroit, depicted in this Frederic Remington illustration, as well as against Fort Pitt and nine other British posts. The siege ended when Pontiac’s warriors ran out of supplies.

Pontiac and his followers were unable to procure supplies to continue the siege, which forced many of the Indians to leave in the fall and winter. This effectively put an end to the siege. Pontiac surrendered in 1765 when it became apparent that French assistance was not forthcoming and his bid for a unified stand proved unsuccessful. Although by this time the British had acknowledged that Fort Detroit was indeed on Ottawa land, Pontiac permitted the British to remain there. Pontiac was subsequently pardoned by the British, who began to reassess their trade and gift policies. Pontiac, who was rumored to be planning an attack on the Peorias, was assassinated in 1769.

The turmoil that erupted during Pontiac’s Rebellion spurred the British government to act in an effort to reduce conflict in the West. King George III issued his Proclamation of 1763, which prohibited English settlement west of a line that ran down the ridge of the Allegheny and Appalachian mountains. The proclamation did little to stem English speculation and settlement in the West, however, and ultimately helped enflame the American colonials against the English crown. In 1776 the colonies declared their independence from Great Britain.

See also *American Revolutionary War; French and Indian War (1754–1763); Great Britain, Indian Policy of; Proclamation of 1763.*

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