

Date : June 6, 2018 Author : Christophe Champalaune

Let's have a look on a new game from GMT on P500 since November 2017.

Plains Indian Wars (*PIW*) covers the conflicts between the Plains Indian Tribes and U.S Cavalry, invading immigrants at the end of the 19th century.

It's a light wargame can be played by 1 to 4 players but is best as a 2 players game.

Game play averages 60 to 90 mn.

For those who played Academy games (1812:the invasion of Canada and 1775, Rebellion, Vikings 878) , you would recognize the same feelings and mechanisms but it is a different game with special goals and a very attractive theme.

It is a card-driven allows placement of cubes (North and South Tribes , U.S Cavalry, Settlers, Wagons which represent settler streams bound for the west coast, tribes enemies of the North and South tribes and the Transcontinental RailRoad).

But let's stopping the narration because it is a simple game to understand with a strategic face,

It made me 15 minutes to explain the rules to my son of 14 years old !!!

we are going to review some turns with pictures for illustrate the game play with a narrative ambiance of the 19th century !!!!

Bear in mind, I am french, I love game about Indians (Navajo Wars, Comancheria, Blood on the Ohio, 🐎 Colt Express – *little joke*) and I apologize for my grammatical mistakes but I hope you catch my mind explaining **PIW**.

To complete this review, it made me about 40 hours work.

It is a simple review which doesn't go on any details of the rules, the review is based on a two players game.

Also, the game is not the final version, it is a prototype, you will see dice with stickers ,

For the final product, I hope the same beautiful dice with carve sides but the game play is finished, so keep it in mind please,

A Video review will follow in a few weeks, stay tune on **PIW** !!!!!

SET-UP

The regions between Sacramento and ST Louis are not opened, many tribes controls the plains, here is the set-up :

BLACK CUBES waiting to be placed on the RailRoad !!!

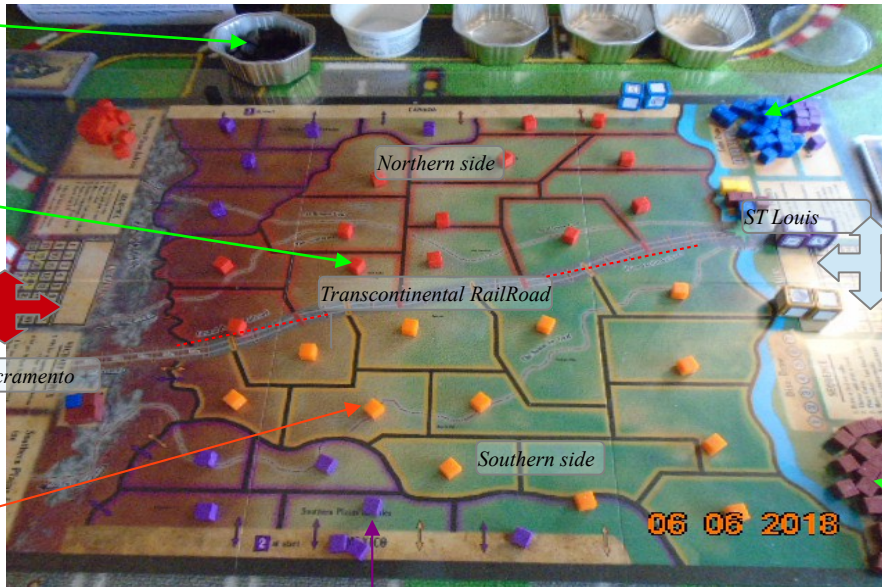
RED CUBES are North tribes as Sioux, Blackfeet, Mandan and more....

ORANGE CUBES are South tribes as Apaches, Comanches, Cheyenne and Kiowa and more...

BLUE CUBES are the US CAVALRY which are in his Ready box.

Indian Player Side

Sacramento



US Player Side

PURPLE CUBES are the tribal enemies of the Plains Indians or Mexicans and are controlled by the Cavalry.

YELLOW CUBES are wagons (families going towards the west (don't see on the photo !!! sorry, they are in their Ready Box .

THE INDIAN PLAYER SIDE

The Side of Northern and South Plains tribes :

CANADA

MEXICO

Here is one of your enemies : the Tribal Indians (purple cubes near Canada and Mexico)

Other purple cubes, near Mexico !!!

Red cubes : Northern Plains Tribes.

Orange cubes : Southern Plains Tribes.

Bear in mind, your number of cubes available for Placement for Indian Player will decline as the game progresses, so manage carefully your futur conflicts otherwise your casualties box will increase very fast.



As the Indian player, your goal is :

- to controls the more regions as possible !!!!! 1 point for each including purple regions.

- to destroy the more "wagons" of the Settlers !!! 1 point for each
- stopping the completion of the Railroad !!! 3 points

You will be penalize 3 points at the end of the game if the you control less purple regions that the US Player so :

- expand into Purple Regions as soon as possible.

And a little strategy :

- Preventing the concentration of Settlers cubes at Railheads

- mix forces early and often (Northern Tribes can enter or retreat into Southern controlled regions and vice versa – it will allows to add more Dice for conflicts up to 4 dice maximum !!!!

THE U.S. PLAYER SIDE

The Side of the U.S Player controls the Cavalry, the Settlers, the "Wagons", the enemies (purple cubes) :

AND , AND

the Construction of the TRANSCONTINENTAL RAILROAD which are your **black cubes**.



BROWN CUBES :Settlers..

YELLOW CUBES waiting!
Let's go to the West

BLUE CUBES :Cavalry

PURPLE CUBES :Enemies

Your construction Railroad begins either from *ST Louis* in the east forward to the west

AND

From *Sacramento* in the west

We will see after the differences between the placement from the two directions ,

As the U.S player, your goal is :

- to control the more regions as possible !!!!! 1 point for each , excluding Purple Regions.
- 1 point for each "Wagons" cube that reaches the Rockies or is left in the Plains Regions
- completing the Railroad !!! 3 points

And a little strategy early :

- Focus on construction the Railroad
- Pouncing on isolated bands

Later in the game : to control Purple Regions more than the Indians Player for penalize 3 points the Indian Player.

NOW, LET'S PLAYING SOME TURNS

FIRST :



Turn order is random. He is determined by the order that the discs are drawn from a bag.

So you have 7 discs for each faction :

US PLAYER
 Cavalry : blue
 Settlers : brown
 "Wagons" : yellow
 enemies : purple
 Railroad : black

The INDIAN PLAYER
 North tribes : red
 South tribes : orange

SEQUENCE OF PLAY :

Now, dive into the play :

The sequence of play is easy :

One player (Indian or US Player – it doesn't matter) draw a disc from the bag : it's a **PURPLE** disc, the enemies of the indians are going to fight, so the US Player controls the Purple cubes,



Don't forget, the Indian Player place Additional red and orange cubes in any region or regions, so my cubes are placed in North and South regions.

1

The US Player puts his purple disc on the Disc Draw

2

he puts ONE purple cube in this purple region following the rules.

3

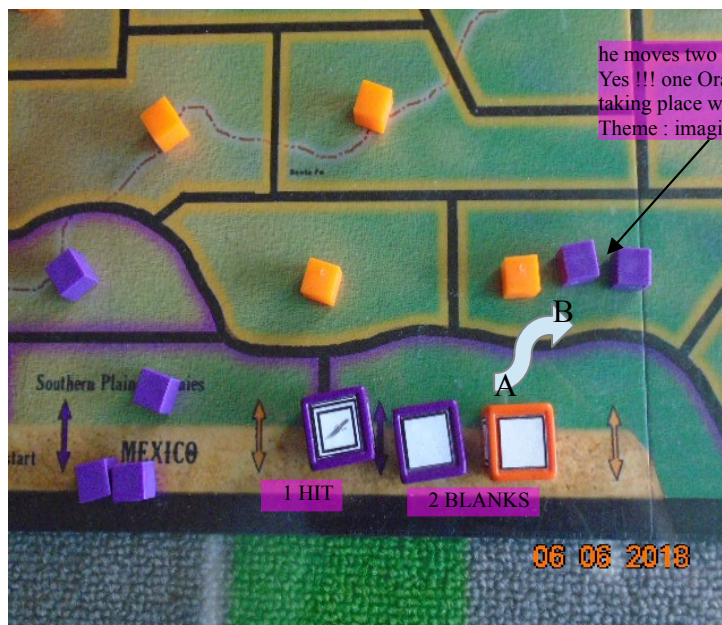
he moves two purple cubes from one region : A to B, Yes !!! one Orange cube is in the region !!! a conflict is taking place with the Southern Plains Tribes !!!! Theme : imagine it is Comanche people !!!

5

Two purple cubes , the US Player rolls 2 dice : 1 hit and 1 blank , so the Indian Player loses his cube !! The Indian player rolls only one die because only one cube is in the region : One blank , so no effect . If the US player rolls one blank instead of one hit, the Indian Player would have the option of retreating only if a purple arrow is present in the region) , this is not the case !!! The lost orange cube goes in the casualties area, no chance to get back ! The population begins to decline

4

As the Orange Cube is attacked, The Indian Player must resolve an ambush : He rolls ONE DIE and it is a blank , so no effect !!! the ambush fails



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we draw another disc from the bag : it's a **ORANGE** disc, the Southern Indians Tribes are on the edge to react !!!

The 4 major factions (South and North indians tribes, US Cavalry and Settlers have 15 cards and 2 custom-dice)
The Purple Faction known as "Enemies" have two purple custom-dice but no cards.

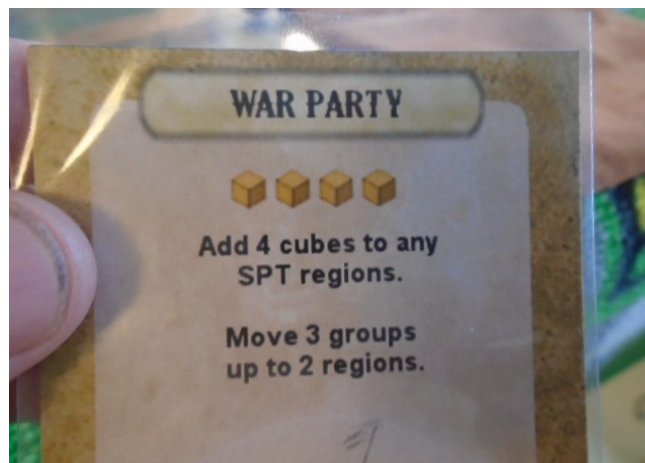


At the beginning of the game, you draw 3 cards as a hand.

The Indian Player draws 3 cards, **two** war party cards and **one** event which in this case is an historical personality : Quana Parker, those who have played Comancheria know this man : a tough Chief Comanche Warrior !!!

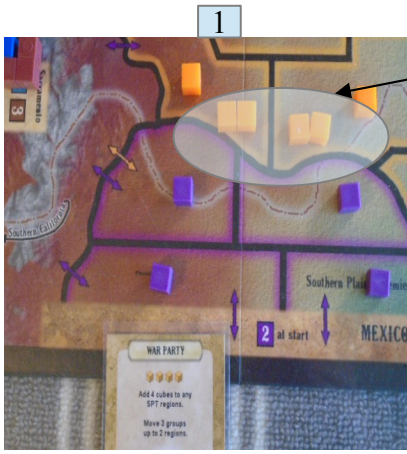


The rules state he can play one **WAR PARTY** and "event" cards can be played as many as we want before or after **WAR PARTY**. As you remember, for the moment, there are only purple cubes on the map against the Indians, not even Cavalry, Settlers or Wagons, so he won't play the fierce warrior but keep it in his hand for future round, this card will be useful to eliminate Settlers in Southern region (*Text on the card says : Settlers roll 1 die in a Southern region you choose this turn*). Instead, he chooses to play a **WAR PARTY** card which allows him to place 4 cubes in a controlled region and next move 3 groups up to 2 regions.



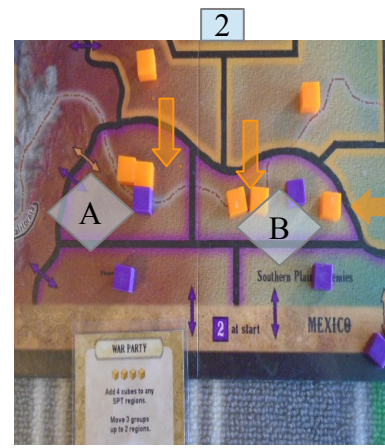
Let's take this option, one of the Indians Player's goal is to destroy the "enemies" which are the purple cubes in the South .

And remember his final objective : to control as many regions as possible (1 point each) and 3 points are in balanced if he controls more purple regions than the US PLAYER !!!! (who controls the purple cubes)



Add 4 Orange cubes in two regions

he moves 3 groups in two regions



The cube is coming from the right region, so this region is now empty

You know what , it's time to engagement or fight to the end !!!! or not keep in mind region **A** gets 2 arrows , orange and purple, so if a blank die will be rolled , the concerned player (after applying the hits of course, we are at war!!) may retreat.

First region **A** : Indian Player rolls two orange dice and the US Player one purple die ,

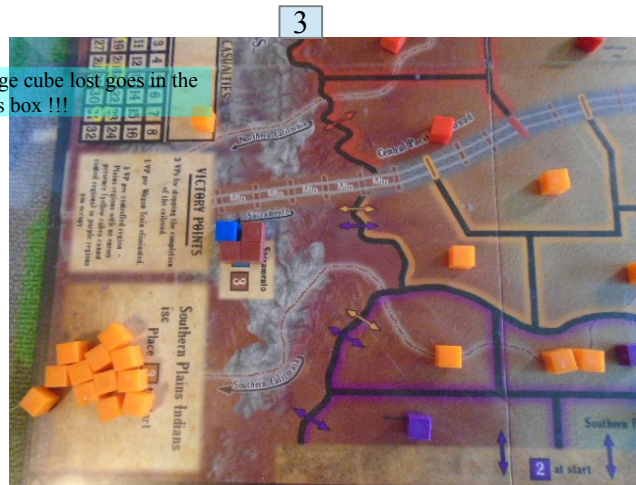
the Purple die has 2 hit sides, one treaty side and 3 blank sides.
Each Orange die has 2 hit sides, one treaty side and 3 blank sides

So both players are equal but the Indian player has one more cube,

The results are below : 2 hits and one blank



Each Player loses one cube and the Indian player keeps in the region one cube, he could retreat in the Rockies but he prefers staying into this region to control it (get one PV at the end of the game and begins the control of Purple regions).



The orange cube lost goes in the casualties box !!!

The second region **B** is on fire, remember this region has 3 orange dice but the rule states it allows only two dice !!! if the Indian Player would have 8 cubes (the more stacking according to the rules!!!) two dice only !!! but multiples turns to the end ..)



three blanks are rolled, no possibilities of retreating (no arrows)



new turn : 1 hit for the purple and two blanks for the Orange, one orange cube goes in the casualties box ;



Two blanks and one treaty : nothing happened ,

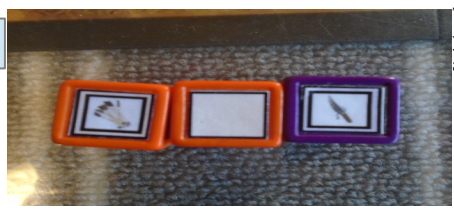
a new engagement is needed

4



One hit for the purple and two blanks, new round
At this point, there is only one cube of each faction in the region,

5



Two hits for each faction, you know what ? At the beginning the orange player had 3 cubes against one. and who is winning ?

Let's get a look on the map, the Indian Player chases the enemies away from two regions !!!



The indian player applies his casualties, the orange cubes go in the casualties box !!!

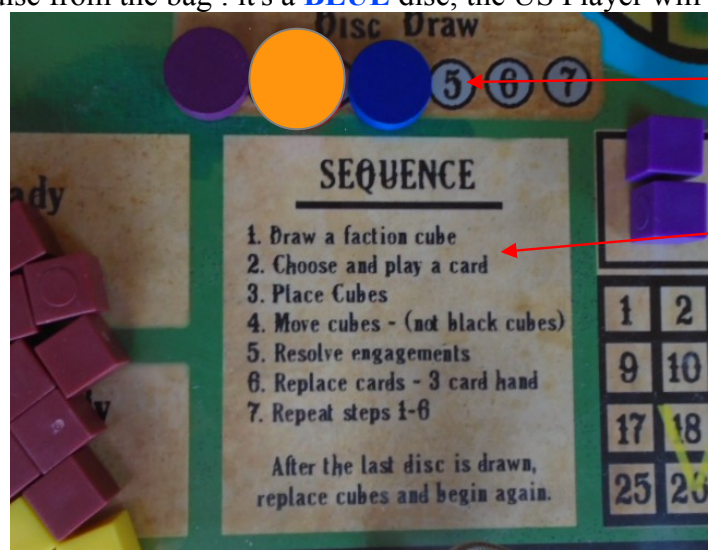


Nobody gets control of this region, the US Player was lucky, the chance to win the battle was minor : 3 cubes against one,

He discards his card and replace it to get a new 3 card hand ready, if he was used 2 cards, he would draw 2 another cards, and you are wondering what happens if one player is out of cards ? *THE GAME ENDS*, so be carefull when you use your cards and watch out for your opponent !!!

It is one of the two conditions for the determination of the ending.

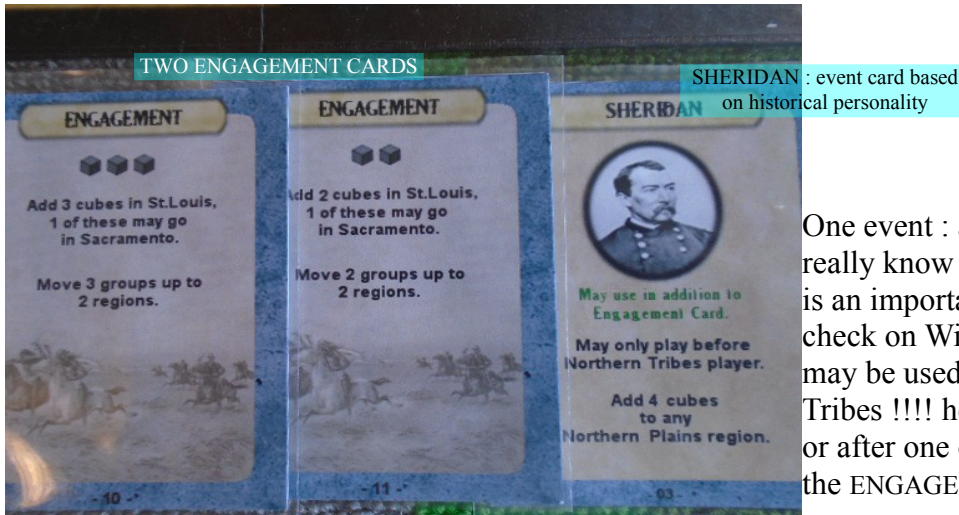
We draw another disc from the bag : it's a **BLUE** disc, the US Player will react to Indians !!!



we put the blue disc on the track, you see, for this round 4 discs are going to be drawn and if I am the US Player, the Indian Player will play its RED faction soon !!!

Sequence of play : easy and fast

Look at the three cards for the US Player :

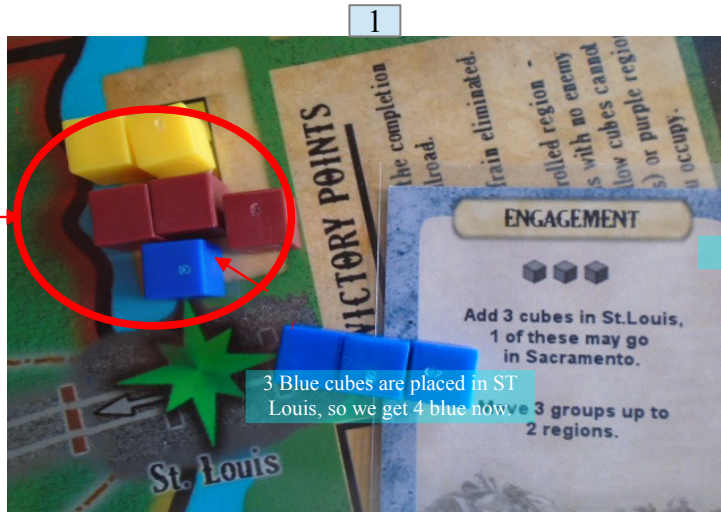


One event : as a french , I don't really know this guy, but I think he is an important general (I will check on Wikipedia), Oh this card may be used before the Northern Tribes !!!! he can use it now before or after one of the two other cards : the ENGAGEMENT CARDS.

Also, the US Player wants to occupy the region next to ST Louis to protect his futur Settlers and gets possibilities to build the Railroad fastly !!! let's play, oh the SHERIDAN card will be usefull later because he can only use blue cubes if there are in ST Louis , so he keeps it in his hand and he is going to play an ENGAGEMENT CARD :

All these cubes were the set-up, You put them in ST Louis :

- 1 blue
- 3 browns
- 2 yellow "wagons"



he enters in a region controlled by one unique indian faction, so As the Red Faction is attacked, That faction can target one cube from the largest enemy group !!



The US Player moves 4 blue cubes, he may take other friendly factions with blue cubes, he decides to take 3 brown cubes, each blue cubes can pick up two brown cubes.

Let's play an AMBUSH sequence and next an engagement :



The Indian Player rolls one die, It is a hit !!!
The US Player removes one Blue cube towards his Casualties Box

The US Player is feeling well to attack with his Settlers !!!!



Each player rolls his dice, watch the results :



The Indian Player rolls two red dice, One hit !!!
The US Player removes one Brown cube towards his Casualties Box, the loss is chosen by the player controlling his faction , he selects his losses From the largest faction represented.

The US Player rolls two blue dice maximum for his three blue cubes and 2 brown dice maximum for his three brown cubes
Result : 3 hits !!!
The Indians Player removes two red cubes towards his Casualties Box, the loss is chosen by the player controlling his faction , he selects his losses From the largest faction represented.
The Treaty side has no effect but if the Indian Player rolls one treaty, in this case, A retreat would be possible only after The Hits !!!! and only if the US also rolls one Treaty !! (it is a special rule)

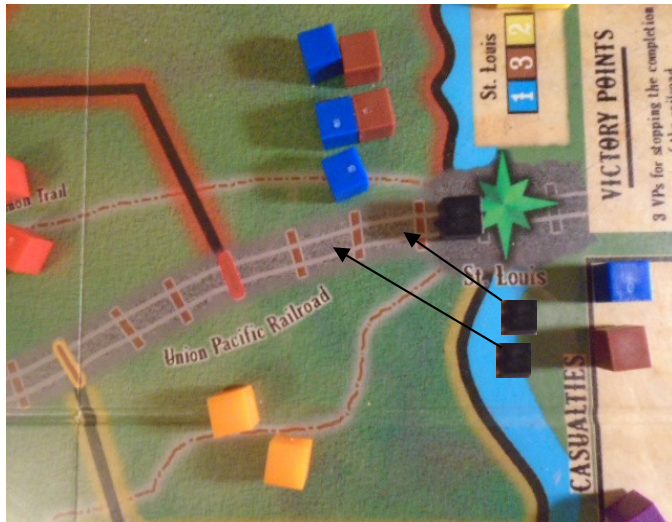


Let's peek a look on the map, great for the US Player !!! He controls the region.

We draw another disc from the bag : it's a **BLACK** disc,
the building of the Transcontinental Railroad is now on progress,

We need now to figure out the placement and progression of the railroad, the Transcontinental Railroad is built from 2 directions:

The UNION PACIFIC

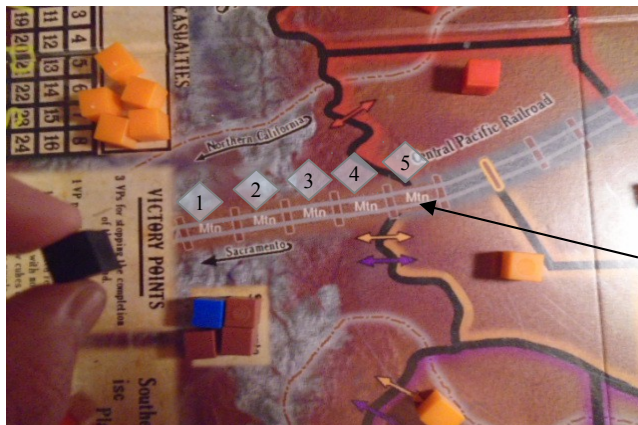


The US Player places one black cube on consecutive spaces starting with the space adjacent to the ST Louis boxe.

This black cube is now considered a Railhead. And the next round, when a new black cube is drawn, he could place up to three black cubes per turn if 1 to 3 brown cubes are in a region adjacent to the Railhead.


In this exemple, the next round, he could place 2 black cubes !!!! because 2 brown cubes are present. Yes the Settlers help a lot building the Rail .

The Central Pacific :



We start building the Rail through the mountains, it is very dangerous !!! so the Settlers roll two brown dice.

Each Hit or Treaty symbol rolled means a section of tracks is completed (blanks are ignored).

Do you see the 5 mountain  rail spaces ? Settlers and Cavalry cubes remain in the Sacramento box until all five "Mtn" spaces are completed !!!! As soon as the 5 spaces are completed, you can built normaly, up to three black cubes may be placed in a turn (see the Union Pacific for the procedure).

Each hit or treaty symbol means a section of the track is completed, the US Player rolls two Brown dice, each die has 4 Blank sides, one treaty and one Hit side, so 2 on 6 to be lucky, I obtain one treaty and one hit, I put 2 Black cubes on the rail space.

US Strategy :

Do you catch the US Player could win 3 points at the end of the game for completing the Railroad ? Fastly put Settlers along the Union Pacific Railroad to maximize the placement of black cubes, protect them with the Cavalry, bring Settlers and Cavalry into Sacramento for reinforcement as soon as all the five Mountain track spaces are completed.

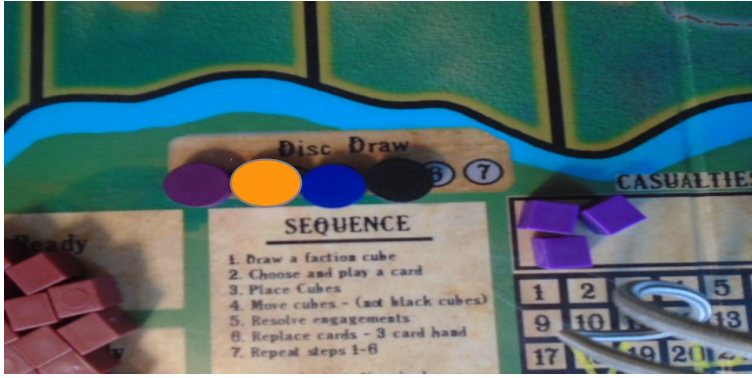
And of course, it will help to take control of regions along the Transcontinental Railroad as the number of Indians cubes declines.

Once, the Mountains are completed, you may place up to 6 black cubes each turn !!! or ZERO if the Indian Player plays cunningly, it's a race against the clock (and the deck of cards!!!).

But, I don't want to spoil your numerous strategy when you will play Plains Indian Wars. Each faction is asymmetrical and is played differently.

TO COMPLETE THE TRANSCONTINENTAL RAILROAD IS THE SECOND CONDITION FOR ENDING GAME

Let's have a look on the Track Disc Draw :

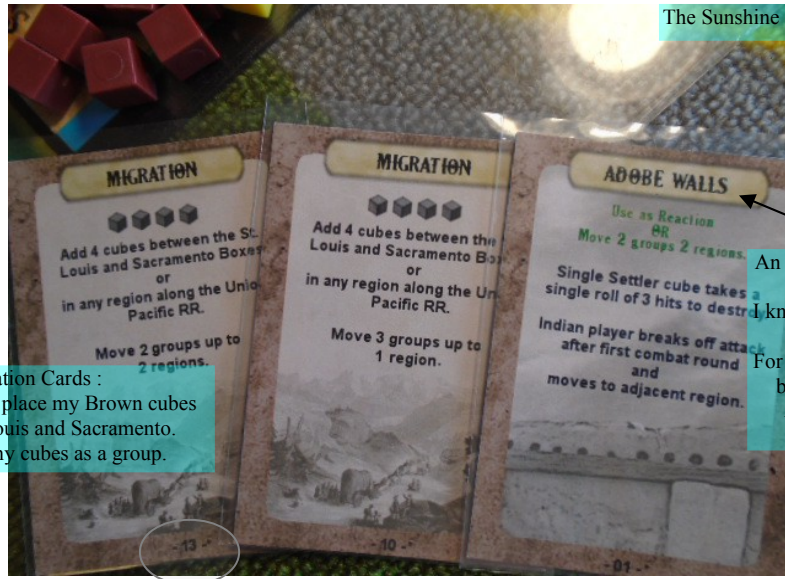


4 Disc have been drawn: 3 for the US Player and one for the Indian Player, it will be the Indians from the South (Orange),

The US Player has his Brown and Yellow discs to come.

The Indian Player only his Red Faction to come.

We draw another disc from the bag : it's a **Brown** disc, the Settlers are going to help the US Player to dive into the great plains, Look at the new three cards for the Settlers :



The Sunshine is rising up for the Settlers !!!

2 Migration Cards :
I choose where to place my Brown cubes Between ST Louis and Sacramento.
And I move my cubes as a group.

An event card based on a Historical event : I don't need to see Wikipedia, I know this event (one board game treats of this topic).
For the US Player it is a Reaction card may be played when an opponent declares An attack , you only follow the text To break off Indians attack !!!



The US Player plays the Migration card number 13 and places 4 brown cubes in ST Louis box.



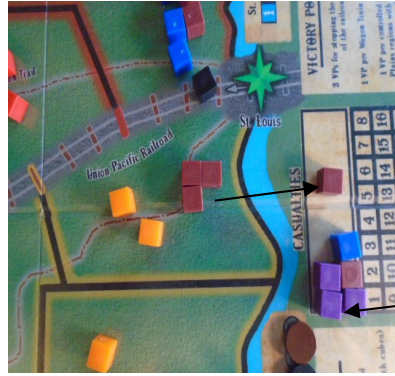
he moves one group as seen in the photo and he uses his second movement to transfer the brown cube in the casualties box towards his Settlers Ready box (wagons can't use this rule, and of course Indians – there are no ready boxes for the Indian Player) , it is a way for the US Player to transfer his loses to the Ready boxes (not very judicious at this time of game but illustrates well a basic rule).

As you can observe, Indians are waiting us and an ambush is going to take place. (as described in the rules).

The Ambush :

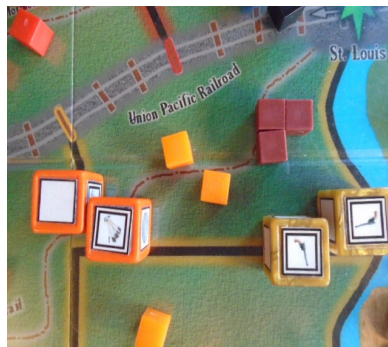


The Indian Player rolls one hit,



the US Player removes one brown cube to his casualties.

The US Player has forgotten to transfer the brown cube to the ready box.



Now the core attacks ,

the US Player rolls 2 brown dice for his Settlers : 2 hits

the Indian Player rolls 1 hit



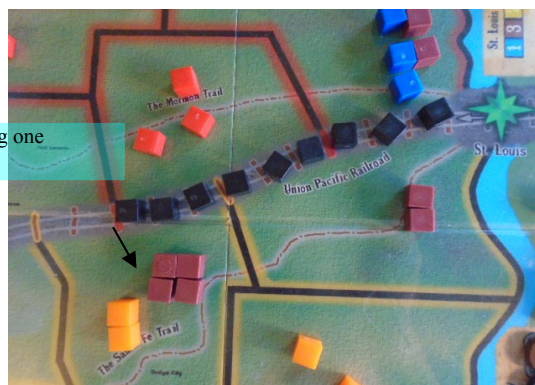
Two Orange Cubes dead and only one brown cube.

The situation is quite clear now .

Settlers are usefull to clear the region ;

You could asking now how to move deeply in the regions with only so few movement points : relevant thinking

Exemple for showing one situation



Brown cubes placed in St Louis box may spend one movement point to begin movement in any plains region containing one or more black Union-Pacific Railroads....

The US Player discards his Settlers Card and pick up one face down of course, he has only 12 cards in his deck.

We draw another disc from the bag : it's a **YELLOW** disc,
The Settlers with their families are going forward to the west coast !!!!
Don't forget, each Yellow cubes who completes its journey
by moving into the Rockies worth 1 point at the end of the game.



At this point, nothing happens, no combat or anything else.

Each time, the yellow disc is drawn, 2 yellow cubes are placed in ST Louis. Then, all yellow cubes move forward one region, west toward the Rockies along the wagon trail they occupy, this includes the cubes just placed in ST Louis.

Wagons cubes don't initiate an engagement when moving in a region occupied by red or orange Indian cubes.
This is the basic rules

But I won't explain all the rules about how the Indians can destroy the wagons !!! and how wagons can escape !!

I let you discover these minor simple rules that spices the gameplay when you will play Plains Indian Wars !!!
Let's dive into the final drawn disc , the red , you remember , only the Northern Plains Tribes have not yet played,

So, we draw the **Red** disc :

Here is the three cards drawn from the deck :



The Indian Player won't play Sitting Bull because it is needed to be played before the Cavalry this round.

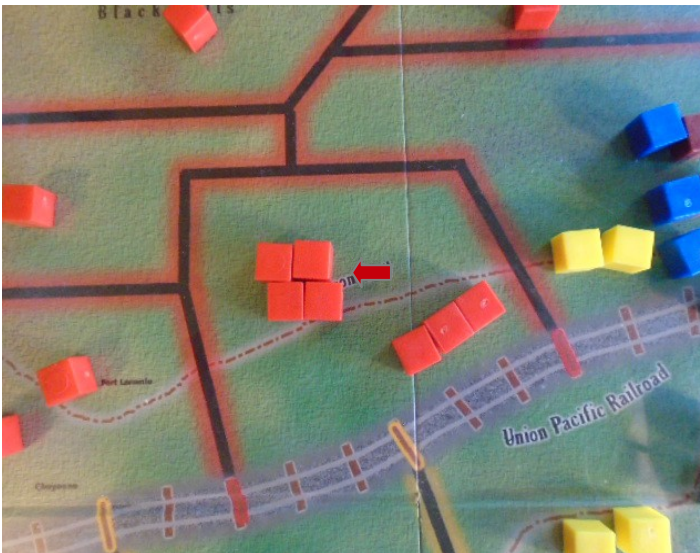
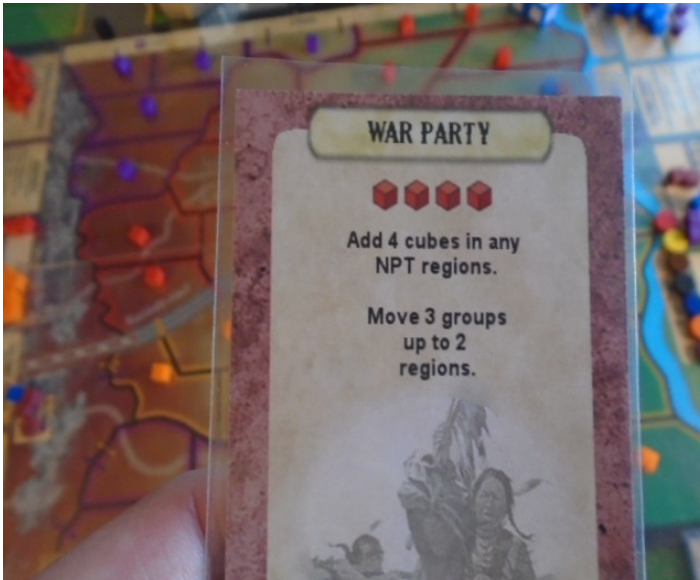


The Indian Player chooses to play GHOST DANCE but no combat will be allowed.



He adds 1 cube to 5 controlled Northern regions

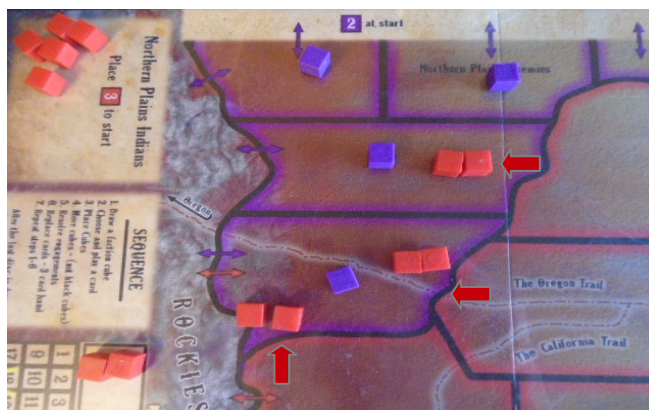
he doesn't get choice because it is the only War Party Card in his hand, so he is going to play it.



Add 4 cubes

Strategy : he prefers to prevent moving Cavalry and Settlers by using ambush along the Railroad,

he is going to attack Purple regions because at the end of the game, each region is awarded 1 point for him and the Purple dice are equal to Orange dice for the strength (2 HIT SIDES). he won't attack Cavalry because each blue die has 3 HIT SIDES and he wants to profit of the ambush, remember the Northern / Southern Indian cubes are limited for the game !!!

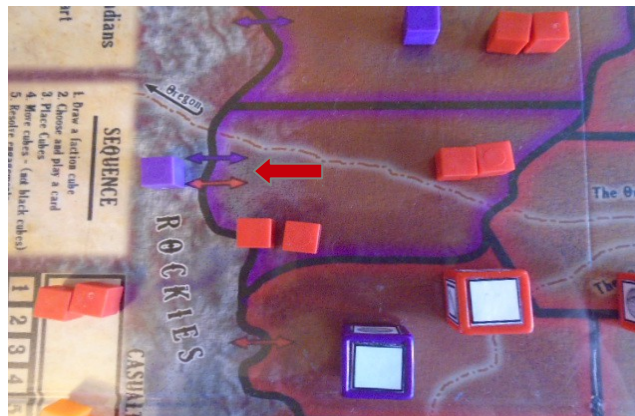


Next he is going to move 3 groups up to 2 regions as per the text on the card.



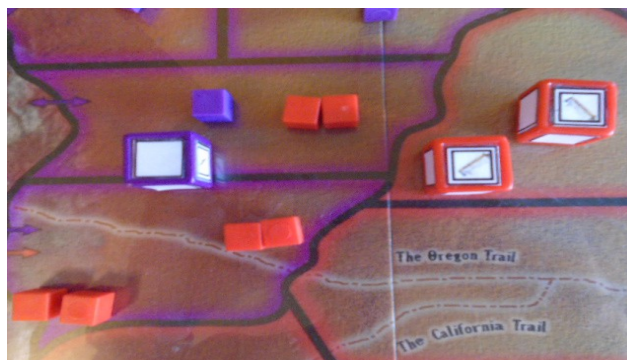
Each player rolls his dice :
 (don't forget for each faction: 1 cube:1 die / 2 cubes :2 dice / 3 cubes and more: 2 dice)
 1 Blank for US Player and 2 Blanks for the Indian Player :

Red and Purple arrows are present,
 The Indian Player may retreat 2 Orange cubes
 and the US Player 1 Purple cube -



The Indian Player stands on his ground!!!

The US Player decides to retreat into the Rockies the "enemies" Purple cube !!



The second engagement is a blast :
 2 Hits for the orange
 1 Blank for the purple
 Although a retreat would be possible, but the hits are first applying.
 The Purple cube goes into the casualties box

The map after the combat :



The final situation is positive for the Indian Player, he takes control of 2 regions, so 2 points for the moment.

One lost and one retreat for the US Player, so 2 regions are out of control !!!.

Now, it is the ending round, we pick up all our discs and put them on the bag. We begin a new round until one of the two conditions end the game.

END OF THE ROUND

Question for you gamers , I have made a big mistake during one turn ,
Could you make a comment on BGG for that and write down just below this file ?

After, I will choose one or several comments, contact you for sending me your photo and include it at the end of the video review with a small text **from you** explaining why you appreciate *PIW*.

FINAL CONCLUSION :

I hope you appreciate this first round and give you an overview and details how Indians Plain Wars plays. Yes, it is cubes moving on the map but personally, I didn't feel this mechanism while playing, I feel this time of history for controlling the great plains.

THE PLUS :

The both players act very differently with many dice rolling and thinking for placement cubes. Yes, there is a little factor of random but it can be mitigate with good thinking about the placement of cubes, the right time to use event cards and the lecture of the strategy of the opponent, the reading of the Disc track is an help. You can play PIW easily with your son or daughter to introduce them to this period of time. There is not downtime in the game because it is a back and forth between two players with dice rolling and "event" cards may be used as reaction when an opponent declares an attack (I love this part, fun to break off an attack like Adobe Walls), so if you like rolling dice, card-driven, simple goals with strategy, 15 minutes to explain the rules, a strong theme and if you like this period of history, I think this game would be a beautiful opportunity to have a good time.

At my first play with my son , I was advantage because I know the game better, so I played it very simply to create a fun space of playing for both players, I win but my son was enjoyed and wanted to play again. I think this game will appeal and please to any kinds of players, pure wargamers will enjoy the game, no need of rack his brain to play an elegant game, I enjoyed playing it with my older son and allows me to teach him this period of history with a light touch (fun before schooling). More, the game is working and challenging for about 90mn max.

NEUTRAL : After playing 4 or 5 times , the feeling strategic is always the same, so the replayability is framed by the goals of each player, but isn't it the same thing for many games ? The game is not expensive so I will keep PIW in my collection and play it sometimes.

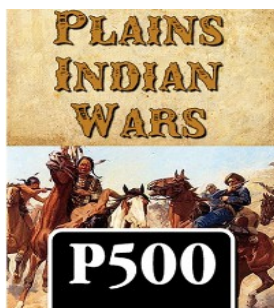
THE LESS :

The rule book was not so easy to take charge of all the information, 12 pages dense, complete but I had to make many back and forth to find the right information, I think it needs to be built again with a glossary. for example, I didn't know how to move my Nothern Plains Tribes in the South and vice versa, the rule is inside ,well written but I missed it when reading the rules many times !!! no big deal but a rule book is a key for the succeed of a game !!! For a game that can be explained in 15mn, I spent many times reading the rules to achieve a complete knowledge. John sent me a prototype and idem for the rule book, so I am sure it will be clarify. GMT is known for high quality.

My rating : 2 thumbs up

I hope not to be disrespect during this presentation (using word as "destroy") because many suffering occurs during this period of time but it is only a game and it may help people to dig into Plains culture. Other games from GMT about Natives helped me to dive into the past of American nation, before I didn't know anything about Navajo and Comanche people, now I undestand a bit this time of history.

I thanks John to send me the prototype, I precise this "review" was made freely with no payment or anything else. I made it because I love American history and American people. I recommend also a very good interview with John Poniske the designer by Grant from *The Players'Aid*. This interview helped me a lot to understand the game.



The game is listed on GMT Gmes website on P500 for the price of 43 \$.

www.gmtgames.com/p-654-plains-indian-wars.aspx