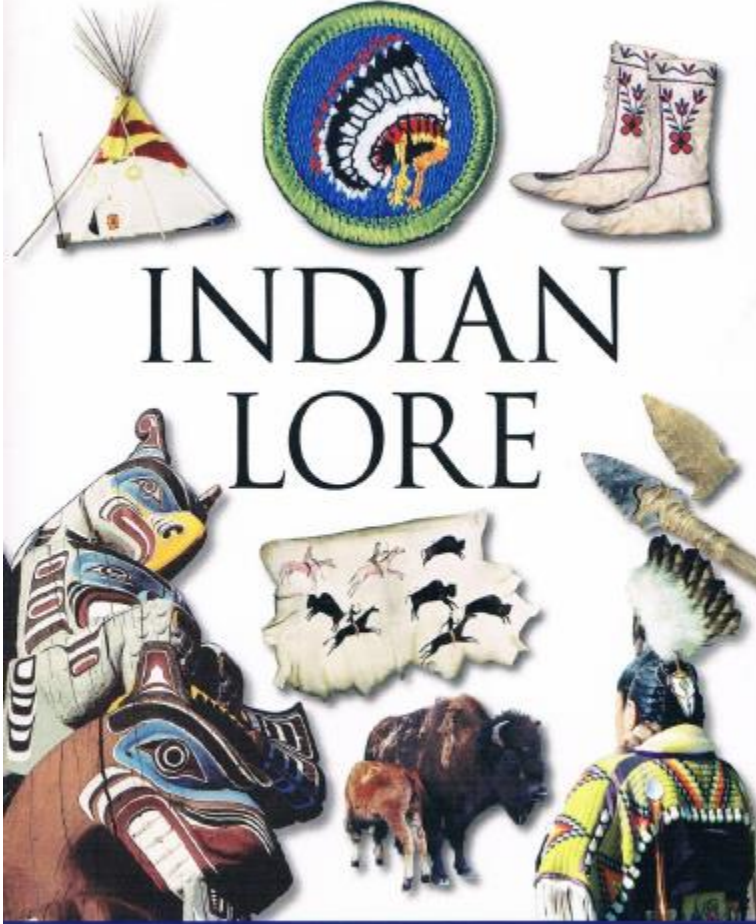


MERIT BADGE SERIES



 BOY SCOUTS OF AMERICA.

Requirements

1. Give the history of one American Indian tribe, group, or nation that lives or has lived near you. Visit it, if possible. Tell about traditional dwellings, way of life, tribal government, religious beliefs, family and clan relationships, language, clothing styles, arts and crafts, food preparation, means of getting around, games, customs in warfare, where members of the group now live, and how they live.
2. Do TWO of the following. Focus on a specific group or tribe.
 - a. Make an item of clothing worn by members of the tribe.
 - b. Make and decorate three items used by the tribe, as approved by your counselor.
 - c. Make an authentic model of a dwelling used by an Indian tribe, group, or nation.
 - d. Visit a museum to see Indian artifacts. Discuss them with your counselor. Identify at least 10 artifacts by tribe or nation, their shape, size, and use.
3. Do ONE of the following:
 - a. Learn three games played by a group or tribe. Teach and lead one game with a Scout group.
 - b. Learn and show how a tribe traditionally cooked or prepared food. Make three food items.
 - c. Give a demonstration showing how a specific Indian group traditionally hunted, fished, or trapped.
4. Do ONE of the following:
 - a. Write or briefly describe how life might have been different for the European settlers if there had been no native Americans to meet them when they came to this continent.
 - b. Sing two songs in an Indian language. Explain their meanings.
 - c. Learn in an Indian language at least 25 common terms and their meanings.
 - d. Show 25 signs in Indian sign language. Include those that will help you ask for water, for food, and where the path or road leads.
 - e. Learn in English (or the language you commonly speak at home or in the troop) an Indian story of at least 25 words, or any number of shorter stories adding up to 300 words. Tell the story or stories at a Scout meeting or campfire.
 - f. Write or tell about eight things adopted by others from American Indians.
 - g. Learn 25 Indian place names. Tell their origins and meanings.
 - h. Name five well-known American Indian leaders, either from the past or people of today. Give their tribes or nations. Describe what they did or do now that makes them notable.
 - i. Learn about the Iroquois Confederacy, including how and why it was formed. Tell about its governing system. Describe some of the similarities and differences between the governments of the United States and of the Six Nations (the Haudenosaunee or Iroquois Confederacy).



Contents

Introduction	6
America's First Immigrants	12
Northeast Woodlands	18
Southeast Woodlands	28
Great Plains	38
Southwest	52
Great Basin and Plateau	64
California	72
Pacific Northwest	80
American Indians Today	90
Indian Lore Resources	92

Introduction

What is the “typical” American Indian like? Although many of us try to classify all Indians into one group, the truth is that Indians are as diverse a group as one can find on this Earth.



Using the term “American Indian” to describe all of the native peoples of North America is like using “European” for all the nationalities in Europe. Swedes and Spaniards, Greeks and Germans, Britons and Romanians—all are Europeans, but all have distinctly different cultures and traditions.

So it is with American Indian tribes. American Indians have many different cultures, languages, religions, styles of dress, and ways of life. In fact, they were not “Indians” until Europeans called them by that general name. The original inhabitants of North America thought of each tribe as a separate nation, with different names, customs, and languages.

Therefore, as you work on the Indian Lore merit badge, remember that there is no “typical” American Indian. There are

Onondaga, Seminole, Dakota, Yakima, Paiute, Navajo, Cherokee, Menominee, and scores of others from coast to coast. Most Indians today identify first as members of their tribe, and secondly as American Indians.

To learn about these different groups is to take an exciting journey of discovery in which you will meet some of America’s most fascinating peoples. In your journey, you will trace the footsteps of North America’s first *immigrants* (new arrivals). They inhabited its vast wilderness centuries before the first European set foot in the “New World.” (To Indians, of course, the “New World” wasn’t new; it was a land with a long history.)

You will learn about groups of people who are as varied as the land in which they settled; whose languages, religions, cultures, and ways of life reflect how they *adapted* to (learned to fit into) many different environments.

You will find that American Indians are far different from the stereotypes or common images that are portrayed on film, on television, and in many books and stories. You will learn how the contributions of American Indians helped to shape and influence many elements of life in the United States.

You will see how modern life is influenced by centuries-old Indian ideas about how humankind must coexist with nature and the environment to preserve Earth for future generations. Today, we call it conservation and ecology. To American Indians, respect for Earth and its resources is a basic value. For thousands of years, their traditional ways of life have functioned in harmony with nature.

In your journey, you will learn about American Indians of today, and those who lived years or centuries ago. Individually and as a group, these people have influenced the American way of life and the way in which America has evolved as a cultural, political, and economic world force.

A Scout Is Courteous

As you study Indian cultures, be alert to religious customs, rituals, and traditions, including ceremonies and prayers, dances, songs and music, special clothing, artwork, and even games. Sometimes these are part of sacred rituals. Be careful not to give offense by misusing anything of religious significance. Ask questions if you are not sure whether an item or activity you are portraying is part of a tribe’s religious custom. Just as you might have ceremonies and rituals that are sacred to your faith and your religious practice, so do the Indian groups you are learning about.

Finding Your Way

Every trip begins with a first step. This pamphlet will help you take that important first step in your journey of discovery. Use the information here as a starting point to learn more about American Indians and American heritage.

You might want to focus on only one tribe to fulfill all of the merit badge requirements. You might want to learn more about Indian life in general before Europeans came, as well as after they arrived. You might also investigate how Indians live and work today and carry on their ancient traditions.

Ask for help. Ask your school or public librarian for books and other materials about different Indian groups. If you have a natural history museum in your area, ask the curator or person in charge for information.

See if your town or city has an American Indian center, or an Indian tribal council or similar governing group. Learn first-hand about tribes in your area and about Indian life today. If possible, talk with tribal members about their experiences.

Reality Versus Myth

What many of us know about American Indians comes from the movies, television, comics, and books. What we have seen or read has helped to shape how we think of American Indians. Much of that thinking comes from centuries-old misunderstandings, and prejudices or intolerance.

Misunderstandings started with Christopher Columbus. More than five centuries ago, Columbus thought he had found a shorter route to the Indies, in Asia. He named the group of islands he encountered in the Bahamas “the West Indies,” and called the natives “Indians.”

Europeans who followed Columbus added to the mistakes. America's first settlers believed they had “discovered” a new, empty continent, one without civilization. Therefore, the “uncivilized” peoples who met the settlers when they came ashore must not have any sort of culture or traditions of their own—or so the thinking went.

The settlers saw the New World through Old World eyes. They arrived not only with their possessions but also their narrow viewpoints and ideas about civilization—politics, religion, ethics, economics, art, and culture. They saw what they wanted to see: tribes of Stone Age “savages,” whom they viewed as inferior to themselves.

American Indian or Native American?

You have probably heard that the native people of North America should not be called “Indians.” The citizens of the country of India, in southern Asia, are the Indians. Those 15th-century European sailors who mistook the Bahamas for the Indies mistakenly named the people they met “Indians.”

Is it more correct to refer to American Indians as “Native Americans”? Strictly speaking, anyone born in America is a native American. And even if we're careful to use a capital *N* for a Native American who is an Indian, and a small *n* for a native-born American who is not an Indian, we still can get confused. The term “Native American” also applies to native or *indigenous* peoples of the Hawaiian Islands, Alaska, Puerto Rico, and Guam.

Here is some advice from Dr. David Hurst Thomas of the American Museum of Natural History in New York. Dr. Thomas learned “Indian lore” when he was a Boy Scout, and he credits his Scouting work for starting him on his career in anthropology and archaeology. In his book *Exploring Native North America* (2000), Dr. Thomas writes:

“Indigenous people throughout Native North America recognize the garbled logic behind all such labels. Most simply accept the imprecision and use terms such as American Indian, Canadian Native, Native American, Indian, and Native more-or-less interchangeably. . . .

“Of much greater concern to most Indian people is the tribal name. Today, those native Arizonans formerly known as ‘Pima’ and ‘Papago’ prefer to be called the O’odham people. Some Navajo people would like to be known as Diné, a traditional name meaning ‘The People.’ Some, but not all, Native people prefer the terms ‘Lakota’ and ‘Dakota’ over the more-common ‘Sioux’ (which is a French variant of an Ojibwe or Chippewa word meaning ‘enemy’). Whenever discussing a tribe . . . try to use the term preferred by the particular tribe in question.”

If the Europeans could have looked beyond their prejudices, they would have seen that the Indians had sophisticated civilizations and complex systems of government and laws. But the Europeans didn't understand the Indians, and the Indians, who had lived here for thousands of years, found the new arrivals equally strange and puzzling.

Appreciating Tribal Differences

You will discover many differences in the various tribes of North America. These differences generally reflect the environments in which the groups originally lived.

Supernatural relates to a belief in God, or gods, ghosts, and spirits.

Some groups were farmers; others were nomads who hunted game and foraged for food. (*Nomads* keep moving, following food sources such as wild game.) Some Indians depended on fishing; others ate only red meat.

Most believed that nature belonged to everyone and to no one. The land, the rivers and seas, and the air were gifts that could not be owned or sold. Some tribes believed that Mother Earth was sacred, and that it was wrong to cut into her body by tilling the soil.

Most Indians believed (and continue to believe) that all living things are linked together and depend upon each other. They believed in the supernatural. Different tribes had different beliefs about the spirit world and practiced their beliefs with many kinds of rituals and ceremonies.

Indian Culture and American Democracy

The basic principles of the Haudenosaunee of New York and Ontario (also known as the Iroquois Confederacy or Six Nations) are explained in their Great Law of Peace. It is a *constitution*, with principles and laws that determine the powers and duties of the government.

Many Americans think the Great Law of the Haudenosaunee influenced the development of American democracy. Interesting similarities exist between the Great Law and the U.S. Constitution.

Some historians, however, say there is little evidence that America's founding fathers ever read the Haudenosaunee constitution. Some believe it is more likely that the writings of European scholars influenced the framers of the U.S. Constitution.

Most people agree that colonial American leaders often met, negotiated, and traded with the Six Nations and with other American Indians. In fact, Benjamin Franklin knew about the Confederacy of the Six Nations—he wrote about it in a letter in 1751.

Did the Haudenosaunee constitution help shape the nature of American democracy, particularly through Franklin? You will need to answer that question to your own satisfaction if you choose to fulfill requirement 4i.

Indians and American Culture

Few of us realize how much of American culture has been influenced by American Indians. Many of our ideas about freedom, as expressed in the Constitution of the United States, came from the Indian way of life. Indians deeply respected individual rights and equality. Many groups governed themselves by a system of values learned from infancy and voluntarily followed by every member of the group.

Individuals enjoyed great personal liberty. Leaders did not rule, but advised and helped to resolve disputes. Everyone had the right to speak out on issues, and the group had to agree before taking any action. Many Europeans left their homelands hoping to find such a place to live, where they could be free from oppressive rulers and practice their beliefs without interference.

Indians introduced the first settlers to many new food crops. Corn, potatoes, and tomatoes—staple foods in cultures around the world—came from the Americas and were first cultivated by American Indians. In fact, 60 percent of the food eaten worldwide today comes from plants that were originally farmed by American Indians—mainly Indian women. They were the first to grow and harvest foods such as pumpkins, squash, beans, sunflower seeds, and avocados.

The Indians were inventors. Kayaks, canoes, moccasins, hammocks, ponchos, dogsleds, toboggans, and parkas are all from American Indian cultures.

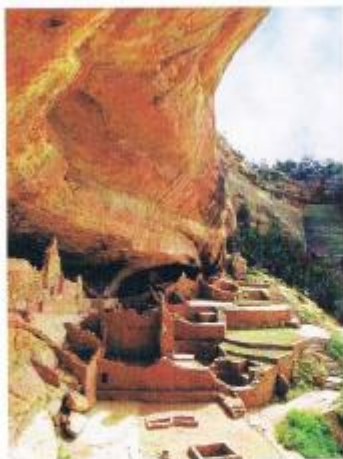
Language in the United States would be very different without the Indian influence. Many names of cities, states, lakes, rivers, plants, and animals, and common expressions have Indian origins. See how many different items or words you can find that were first used by Indians and then adopted by nonnatives. Can you list the 26 states whose names are of Indian origin?

Medicinal plants that Indians discovered and used are still being used for medicines today. From the bark of the willow tree came salicylic acid (used in aspirin). Digitalis, a heart medicine, came from the common foxglove.

America's First Immigrants

Paleo-Indians

Scientists have different theories about when Paleo-Indians—America's true pioneers—first set foot on the North American continent. (*Paleo-Indian* is the name given to the Asian migrants of the late Pleistocene age, a prehistoric time known as the great age of glaciers. The Pleistocene is a division on the geologic time scale, similar to the Jurassic period of movie fame but much more recent.) Some scientists believe Stone Age people came to North America as early as 40,000 years ago; others believe it was as late as 12,000 to 15,000 years ago.



Dwellings of the ancestral Pueblo

To trace the movements of Paleo-Indians, scientists look for clues in the physical evidence the people left behind. Most now think that these migrants probably traveled from Asia across a land bridge that once connected Siberia and Alaska. Today, the Bering Strait separates Siberia from Alaska by about 50 miles of seawater. But during the last Ice Age, massive sheets of ice covered huge expanses of land and "locked up" so much water that the world's oceans dropped. The receding waters opened the Bering Land Bridge. People could have simply walked across into North America.

It took them many centuries to get here. Small bands of people moved gradually from place to place. They were not intentionally migrating. They were following herds of game, or seeking better places to forage for roots and berries—or just looking to see what lay beyond the next hill.

Along the way, they found plentiful game to hunt. They stalked some now-extinct animals, such as 20-foot-long ground sloths, massive woolly mammoths standing 14 feet tall at the shoulder, and beavers as large as today's black bear. They foraged for food with the huge bison and moose. While the hunters were stalking game, saber-toothed cats with 8-inch canines, dire wolves, and giant bears were surely stalking the hunters.

Scientists believe they know when and how these ancient wanderers lived, based on intriguing clues they left behind. Near Clovis, New Mexico, archaeologists found evidence of the first identifiable American Indians—the Clovis people—at mammoth kill sites that date back about 12,000 years. (Archaeologists study human life and cultures of the past by examining the things those people left behind.) The Clovis people who apparently camped and hunted there left distinctively shaped spear points, stone scraping and cutting tools, and deftly fashioned tools of bone and ivory.

The Clovis people probably lived in small bands of no more than four to 10 families—about the number their nomadic lifestyle could support. A small band of hunters could track and kill a 6-ton mammoth. A few families could live off the kill.

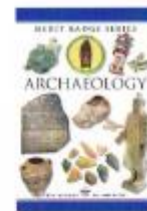
The Clovis people were followed by other groups who left their own marks on prehistory. The Folsom people, named for a discovery at Folsom, New Mexico, left behind stone weapon points (distinct from the Clovis) that are about 8,000 to 10,000 years old.

In Colorado, scientists found the remains of almost 200 bison in one site where a group of Plano people camped. Their tools and weapons were different from the Clovis and Folsom peoples, so archaeologists identify them as a separate group.

Because of the size of the kill, scientists can also imagine how the hunt was conducted. As many as 150 people may have taken part, helping to stampede a herd of bison over a cliff and slaughtering the animals killed or injured in the fall. Such a well-organized hunt could mean that this group had a social order that required discipline and leadership among its members.



Clovis point



For more about archaeologists and how they uncover the stories of the past, see the *Archaeology* merit badge pamphlet.

Evidence of a desert culture was found in Danger Cave in Utah. People lived in this cave off and on for many centuries from about 11,000 years ago. They may have been among the first people in the world to practice the craft of basket weaving.

Another desert group, the Cochise, may have been the first farmers in North America. In Bat Cave, New Mexico, archaeologists uncovered a cache of Cochise-style weapon points and several corn cobs from a primitive type that was deliberately grown, or cultivated.

We cannot be sure how farming got started. Perhaps some observant food-gatherer noticed that certain plants grew in certain places, and realized that where seeds fell to the ground, new plants later grew. Maybe seeds were buried in the ground as a sacrifice, and someone noticed that plants appeared on that spot soon after. However it happened, the idea of cultivating crops was a stunning advance in the way of life for prehistoric people.

Changing Patterns

Huge animals like the mammoth began to disappear at the end of the Ice Age. Then people began to hunt smaller animals like rabbits, deer, and antelope, or fish and fowl. They found other sources of food, too, as they foraged for edible roots, grains,

A New Weapon

By 8000 B.C. (perhaps much earlier), a new invention greatly enhanced the hunter's skill. The *atlatl* was a 2- or 3-foot-long stick with a small base carved in its butt end. A spear rested on the atlatl. The hunter threw the spear using a whiplike motion that hurled it from the atlatl toward its target with great force and long-distance accuracy.

This allowed the hunter to be farther away (and safer) when striking at prey. The atlatl was a major weapon until the invention of the bow and arrow, and the arrival of guns with the Europeans.



wild vegetables, nuts, and berries. They made new tools for a changing way of life artfully shaped scrapers and choppers, and notched points for hunting and killing small game.

Between 5000 B.C. and 1000 B.C., some groups settled into semipermanent villages. Although they continued to hunt and forage, they began to cultivate plants deliberately to provide enough food for everyone. Social customs—the ways in which people behave toward each other—changed as people settled together in villages to live and raise their families.

Of course, not every Indian group changed to this way of life. Some tribes remained hunters and foragers until modern times.

The role of men (the hunters) and women (the foragers and farmers) changed to adapt to a more settled existence. New ways of doing things evolved. Artisans crafted utensils that were not only useful, but beautiful. Religion and ritual became more important. Family and tribal relationships were affected.

The Formative Period

Great civilizations were built during the period from about 1000 B.C. to A.D. 1500. Many of these were in Mexico and in Central and South America. Extraordinary societies also developed in what is now the United States.

The ancestral Pueblo people built huge apartment-like dwellings four or five stories high in Chaco Canyon, New Mexico, and in Mesa Verde, Colorado. This great civilization of the Southwest left behind the remains of a complex and sophisticated culture. Preserved for modern-day archaeologists to study are textiles (fabrics), fragile baskets still vibrant with centuries-old color, black-on-white pottery, furs, and even feathers.

Other remarkable cultures, the Adena and the Hopewell, appeared in the eastern half of the present United States. The Adena culture formed in the Ohio Valley about 500 B.C. To honor their dead, these people built low earthen mounds over graves. As centuries passed, the Adena built their funeral mounds ever larger and more fanciful. Some of the mounds had many layers. Some were shaped like birds, tortoises, or humans. The largest was the Great Serpent Mound near Cincinnati, Ohio. Shaped like a snake wriggling across the woodland, the mound is 20 feet wide, 5 feet high, and a quarter-mile long.

The Hopewell people also arose in the Ohio area, about 100 B.C. They soon dominated the Midwest and influenced a region from the Atlantic to present-day Wisconsin and Iowa, and south to the Gulf of Mexico. The Hopewells built great earthworks. One of their most impressive sites was an enclosure at what is now Newark, Ohio, that covered 4 square miles. Apparently built to house the dead, the site contained burial mounds, a great figure of an eagle, and many avenues, circles, and plazas.

After the decline of the Hopewells, another mound-building society appeared in what is today the southeastern United States. In the centuries after A.D. 800, this Mississippian culture spread from the Great Lakes to the Gulf Coast and from present-day Georgia to as far west as Oklahoma. Mississippian society reached a high point at a city called Cahokia, in what is now Illinois. There, these Temple Mound Builders, as they are called, constructed mounds higher and broader than any others north of the Rio Grande. One massive earthwork rose to a height of 100 feet. At its base it was 1,000 feet long and more than 700 feet wide. The flat top of this huge structure once supported a building—probably a temple—that spread over an area large enough for three modern tennis courts.

Hundreds of years before the arrival of Europeans, Cahokia was a center of art and religion, trade and industry. Long after the first European explorers entered the North American heartland, the great mounds and earthworks of Cahokia and other now-vanished centers of Mississippian life would continue to amaze and mystify the new American settlers.

American Indians Today

As you read in the following pages about the history of Native Americans, keep in mind that as many Indians live in the United States today as when Columbus reached the Caribbean—about 2 million, according to the 2000 census. The direct descendants of America's first people are still very much here. Indians are not people of the past. They are not "vanishing Americans." Indians are a proud and vital part of 21st-century America, and theirs is a proud, vital, and rich heritage. As you learn about Indian history, always be aware that the culture you are investigating is a living, dynamic culture.

Indian Culture After 1492

After Europeans arrived, the lives of American Indians were forever changed.

Newly introduced diseases—smallpox, measles, flu, yellow fever, and others—wiped out whole societies. Wars killed many natives. European ways of doing things were imprinted, sometimes forcibly, on Indian ways. Indians lost traditional hunting and farming lands. Whole tribes and nations were sent to live in faraway places.

Scholars believe that at the time the first Europeans came here, there may have been about 2 million Indians in North America—or possibly as many as 18 million. They had many different traditions and ways of doing things. They lived in all kinds of dwellings: adobe pueblos, longhouses, hogans, plank houses, tepees. Some were farmers; others were hunters and trappers. Some lived in cities. Others lived in small, close-knit communities. They had rich social lives and established systems of government.

The map shown here depicts the approximate regions where different groups lived, and the general names given to cultural (related or neighboring) groups. In each chapter that follows, you will find a list of most of the major groups and tribes included in that cultural area. Not every tribe will be mentioned; nor do all who study American Indians agree on where to place each tribe culturally.

Use the general descriptions of how tribes in each area have lived, worked, and worshiped as a starting point for your journey of discovery. Then do your own research to learn more about the fascinating heritage of the American Indians.

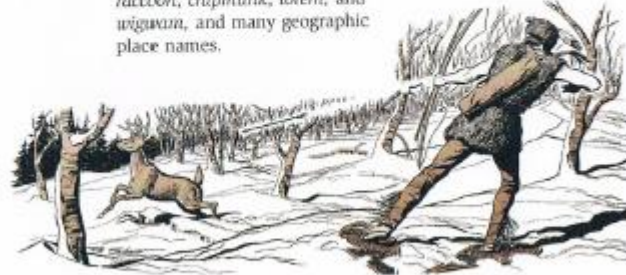


Northeast Woodlands

Tribes on the eastern seaboard were among the first to meet European explorers and settlers. The Pilgrims thought the Indians were heathens and tried to teach them European ways. In fact, the first Europeans to land on the North American continent probably would not have survived their first winter had not the Indian people taught the Pilgrims to hunt, fish, and forage for native foods. Later, these Woodlands Indians taught them to plant foods native to the continent.

Located in the northeast quarter of what is now the United States, the home of the Woodlanders was a huge area. It stretched between the Atlantic Coast and the Mississippi River, and from the upper shore of Lake Superior to about the northern border of present-day Tennessee. Because the environment varied greatly from region to region, these tribes had different ways of living depending on where they lived.

Most spoke some variety of Algonquian, which was the most widespread language in the New World. Siouian and Iroquoian languages also were spoken. English words of Algonquian origin include *hickory*, *hominny*, *moccasin*, *papoose*, *pecan*, *powwow*, *squash*, *terrapin*, *tomahawk*, *raccoon*, *chipmunk*, *totem*, and *wigwam*, and many geographic place names.



Hunters often bagged animals bogged down in the snow. Note the snowshoes.

The People

The tribes, subtribes, and nations of the Northeast Woodlands are generally divided into the following groups. Other tribes besides those listed also lived in this region.

Eastern Algonquian: Abenaki, Mahican, Massachuset, Penobscot, Narragansett, Wappinger, Pequot, Montauk, Delaware (Lenape)

Iroquois (League of Five Nations): Seneca, Cayuga, Onondaga, Oneida, Mohawk, Tuscarora (joined League about 1713)

Western Algonquian (Forest Tribes): Ojibwa or Chippewa, Ottawa, Menominee, Forest Potawatomi

Western Algonquian (Prairie Tribes): Sauk, Fox, Kickapoo, Illinois, Miami, Prairie Potawatomi, Shawnee

The Indians of the coastal plains lived on flat, fertile land between the Atlantic Ocean and hardwood forests teeming with game. Tribes such as the Delaware and Montauk reaped the bounty of sea and forest and also benefited from the lush growing areas where they cultivated crops such as corn.

Farther to the north, where cold winds blew and life was not so easy, lived the Penobscot, Abenaki, and other seminomads.

Corn would not grow in the subarctic northern regions. So these tribes lived a wandering but well-ordered life pursuing deer, bear, moose, wild ducks, and fish. They trapped animals such as beaver for their meat and pelts. After the Europeans arrived, beaver pelts became very valuable, and a brisk trade started between the Indians and the Europeans.

Tribes of the western Great Lakes region included the Menominee, Ottawa, Potawatomi, Ojibwa, and Winnebago. These tribes were both farmers and hunters. Using canoes, they harvested a delicious wild rice that still grows thickly in the thousands of lakes and ponds of that region.



Menominee gathering wild rice. Notice the wigwam. (Courtesy Milwaukee Public Museum)

Some Algonquian groups, such as the Powhatans of Virginia and the Abenakis of Maine, formed powerful confederations that dominated large regions. The mightiest confederation in the Northeast, however, was of the Iroquoians who lived in the forests east of Lake Ontario.

The Algonquian Birchbark Canoe

The birchbark canoes of the Algonquians plied the rivers and lakes of the Northeast Woodlands.

The Algonquians used the light, swift, and graceful watercraft to hunt, fish, trade, and make war.

These lightweight canoes could easily be portaged, or carried from one waterway to another. On the trail, they served as shelter from the elements. They were constructed in all sizes, from small, two-person craft to large canoes for eight to 10 people.

Cedar was normally used for the framework. The bark of birch, peeled from the trees in large sheets, did not shrink or stretch and was ideal for the covering. Bark pieces were sewn together with spruce roots and shaped around the frame. Spruce tree resin waterproofed the seams. The braces and paddles were made of maple.



In the fall, the Iroquois harvested and preserved crops and game for their winter food source.

The tribes of the Mohawk, Seneca, Oneida, Cayuga, and Onondaga made up the Iroquois League of Five Nations. (The Tuscarora later joined the confederacy.) They were farmers whose lives revolved around the seasons. In spring and summer, the women planted and raised corn, beans, and squash—crops they called the Three Sisters. The men hunted and fished.

When Europeans arrived in the New World, these Iroquois Confederacy tribes dominated much of the Northeast. Not every Iroquois-speaking tribe joined the confederacy, however. The Huron, which was a nation of four tribes, and the Tobacco tribes, for example, scorned and often warred with the confederacy.

Dwellings

Among the Woodlands tribes were many types of houses, but a few types are most associated with these groups.

Because the northern tribes were wanderers, moving with the seasons to follow game, they needed portable houses. The

wigwam was perfect for their way of life. Its frame consisted of four saplings bent toward the center. They covered this with long strips of bark sewn together and lined the inside with grass for insulation. Animal skins hung at the entrance. Fir branches covered with moose skins lined the floor. The Abenaki, unlike most other New England tribes, built cone-shaped wigwams that resembled the teepees of the Great Plains Indians.

The village-dwelling Delaware lived on river meadows and built small, irregularly spaced groups of bark buildings. Some were round, domed wigwams; others were oblong and arched; and still others were rectangular longhouses with pitched roofs.

The Iroquois built permanent structures. Known as the People of the Longhouse, they imagined a gigantic, symbolic "longhouse" stretching across their nation, the "doors" guarded by different tribes to the east and west. This imaginary longhouse took actual form in the many pole-and-bark structures that made up each village.

An individual longhouse was about 50 to 150 feet long, depending on the number of families living inside. A typical house could shelter about 50 people. It was built like an arbor, with long poles driven into the ground, then more poles arched across to form a high roof. Long poles running the length of the structure intertwined with the arched poles. Sheets of bark covered the whole structure from top to bottom.

Inside, a long central corridor ran the length of the longhouse, and to each side were boothlike quarters where families slept and stored their possessions. A tall fence, or palisade, surrounded each village. Warriors stood guard there while the villagers carried on their pursuits.

Village and Family Life

The seasons dominated life. In the spring, nomadic tribes would move their entire villages to their favorite coastal fishing grounds to gather lobsters, clams, and shellfish. More settled tribes like the Iroquoians tended to stay in their well-established and protected villages.

During the warm summer months, Indians all along the seaboard turned to fishing and hunting, and in the south, to

Usually, two or three families shared one wigwam.



A wigwam made of grass mats tied to saplings and covered with slabs of bark



Northeastern multifamily longhouse

planting corn. Traders traveled up and down the coast and from inland, bringing the goods of different regions for barter or trade.

In the fall, the northern tribes returned to their nomadic lifestyles and spent the autumn and winter months following moose and smaller game. Their southern neighbors also hunted for winter provisions, but families stayed in their villages. The women tanned hides, sewed, took care of the children, and prepared for the winter.

Many tribes, including the Huron, the Iroquoians, and the Delaware, were *matrilineal*, meaning they traced their ancestry or kin relations through the mother's side. Other tribes were *patrilineal* and traced their ancestors through the male line.

How the Iroquois (Haudenosaunee) Confederacy Was Formed

According to tribal history, the Iroquois Confederacy was first suggested in about 1570 (possibly earlier), when intertribal warfare threatened to destroy the Iroquois. A holy man named Dekanawideh had a vision in which the five warring nations were united under a symbolic Tree of Great Peace. He saw tribes who lived in harmony under a government of law and put the future welfare of their people ahead of any other desire. A Mohawk named Hiawatha heard of the holy man's vision and was greatly moved.

Hiawatha traveled from one tribe to another over the Iroquois territory, spreading the message of a confederation united in peace and under one government. One by one, the tribes accepted this astounding idea. First to join were the Mohawk, who became keepers of the Eastern Door. Then the Oneida, the Cayuga, and the Onondaga, who were the Firekeepers, joined the league. Finally the most warlike tribe, the Seneca, entered the confederacy and became keepers of its Western Door. This was the League of Five Nations; later, when the Tuscarora joined, it was called the League of Six Nations.

The six agreed to stop fighting among themselves and to cooperate for a common defense. Each tribe kept control of its own affairs, but united in matters concerning other tribes and foreign countries.

Modern Six Nations people prefer to be called Haudenosaunee instead of by their French name, Iroquois. Haudenosaunee (pronounced Ho-deh-no-shaw-nee) means "People Building a Long House."



Among some tribes, the *calumet*, a sacred pipe used for rituals of peace and war, was the most cherished possession. The pipe was both an altar and a kind

of passport. French missionary-explorer Jacques Marquette carried a calumet to pass unharmed through the territories of various tribes in the Mississippi Valley.

The oldest woman in the longhouse was supreme. She was "mother" to the entire household in the sense that it belonged exclusively to her and her female relatives. Women in matrilineal societies such as the Seneca were very powerful. The clan mother, with the advice of other women of her tribe, appointed each of the eight Seneca councillor-chiefs. If a councillor-chief failed in his duties, the women could remove him from office.

The chief of a village or several villages would have a council and other city officials, just as cities do today. Town meetings were *powwows*, with singing, dancing, prayers, games, and serious talk all part of the ceremonies.

Some tribes had more than one chief. The peace chief was usually a hereditary position. The war chief was chosen for his military prowess. Some tribes had a third leader, the *shaman*, or medicine man, who was responsible for religious rituals.

Clothing, Arts, and Crafts

During the warm summer months, men of the Woodlands tribes generally dressed in soft deerskin breechcloths, or breechclouts, that covered the loin area. Children did not wear clothes. Women wore kneelength skirts and, after the arrival of Europeans, wampum headbands. *Wampum* were purple and white disk-shaped or cylindrical beads made of clamshell. They were strung together and exchanged as gifts. After Europeans arrived, wampum became an exchange currency like money.



The Wolf belt, strung with wampum (clamshell beads), celebrated the friendship between Northeast Woodlands Indians and white settlers.

Family life was important. Being a family member meant being a member of a *clan*. Clans traced their origins to a common ancestor. They usually were identified by an animal symbol, such as the Bear Clan or the Wolf Clan.

The Myth of the Indian “Squaw”

The role of women in Indian life is largely misunderstood. An Indian woman was not a “squaw” or slave, as the Europeans mistakenly saw her. In fact, many modern-day Indian people regard the word “squaw” as insulting and demeaning.

In most Indian groups, life in the village centered on the family. Chores were divided fairly. As lifeways gradually changed from hunting to foraging to farming, the skills of women, who were the foragers and the first farmers, grew in importance. Women’s economic role became central to the group, and their status and power increased.

Many tribes became *matrilineal*, with family lines traced through the mother. In these groups, a child always belonged to the clan of his or her mother. The father was acknowledged but was the head of the families of his sisters, not of his wife and children. In *matrilocal* tribes, the husband lived with the wife’s family.

Women acquired property and wealth. For the Navajo of the American Southwest, for example, sheep became the basis of wealth, and all sheep belonged to women. Indian women owned herds of horses. Plains Indian women, like the women of many other tribes, owned the lodges and almost everything in them. Pueblo women owned the houses, all the furnishings, and all the crops.

Women had great influence with their husbands. Sometimes they went to battle, with or without their husbands. Women were often the true rulers of a village; they might choose the chief, and fire him if he did a poor job. They certainly were not the drudges or slaves the Europeans considered them to be.



The men of some tribes, the Delaware in particular, liked to wear a *vermilion*, or red, makeup of fat mixed with berry juice and minerals. Women also wore makeup. Some Indian men used sharpened mussel-shell tweezers to pluck their heads bare except for a central crest; others shaved their heads.

In the cooler months, everyone dressed for warmth. Both sexes wore fur shawls and robes woven of downy, waterproof turkey feathers. Deerskin leggings, or trousers, moccasins, and often fur hats provided extra protection from the cold.

The Woodlands Indians used materials at hand to shape tools, weapons, and ceremonial objects. Wood, bark, and other plant materials, and stone, clay, hide, bone, antler, shells, quills, and feathers were used. Later, the Europeans introduced new materials such as metals, glass, and cloth.

The Algonquians used watertight birchbark or the hardwood burls from birch, elm, and maple to make bowls, dishes, and trays. Wooden bowls were made by charring, then scraping the burls. The shredded bark of trees such as basswood was twisted to make twine for sewing. They plaited baskets from sweetgrass and wood splints and used clay for unpainted pottery dishes.

The Iroquois made pottery from clay shaped in coils, then decorated them with geometric designs and sun-dried and fired them in hot, smoldering coals. The Huron embellished clothing and other items with intricate designs using the hairs of moose dyed with bright vegetable colors.

Religion and Ritual

Beliefs and rituals among the Indian tribes were quite varied. The Algonquians believed in forces called Manitou, which had many different forms. Spirits were in all things—animals, plants, water, rocks, the sun, the moon, weather, and even sickness. Shamans were supposed to be able to control these spirits. Each person was thought to have a personal, protective spirit.

Some tribes had sacred societies with special rites, signs, and symbols. Examples include the Midewiwin (the Grand Medicine Society) of the Ojibwa and the False Face Society of the Iroquois, also an organization of healers.

While the women of many tribes excelled at making elaborately decorated clothing, these items were saved for special occasions.



Potawatomi beaded garters, worn during ceremonial dances

Warfare

The means and methods of Indian warfare confused Europeans when they first came to America. Rather than fight in the open, Indians scattered their men and fought from behind fences, trees, and bushes. Surprise and ambush were weapons, as valuable in warfare as axes, bows, arrows, and war clubs.

Most fights were small and were rooted in intense rivalries and blood feuds between tribes. One tribe might avenge the death of a warrior by taking the lives of the offending tribe's warriors. The offending tribe would want revenge, often at the urging of the wife or mother of a slain man. In these raids, people were killed, and captives and goods taken. Prisoners were sometimes tortured and killed; more often they were adopted by the captors' tribe to replace the men lost to war.

The western Algonquians fought mainly to keep others out of their territory, and sometimes helped the French to fight the English. They also carried out raids, took women and children for slaves, sometimes tortured male warriors, and often took the scalps of enemies. But touching a live enemy in battle meant more.

The Iroquois Confederacy began to fall apart with the American Revolution, when four of the Six Nations tribes joined with the British. The defeat of the British by American forces brought them more grief. George Washington sent Gen. John Sullivan on a campaign of pillage and arson that destroyed 40 Iroquois villages and most of their crops.



Woodlands war clubs like this one were carved from a single piece of ironwood. This ball-like head seems clutched in the jaws of a fierce animal.

When the Iroquois united to eliminate intertribal warfare, they turned their full energy to waging war against other tribes and nations, and against the newcomers from Europe. They were great warriors who began developing military skills when they were young, practicing with knives, war clubs, and bows and arrows. Through military exploits, a man could gain great respect and be named a war chief.

The Algonquians called these ferocious warriors the "real adders" or "poisonous snakes," and the name stuck: "Iroquois" is the French adaptation of the Algonquian phrase. One Iroquois chief in particular, Aharihon of the Onondaga, was feared by Indians and Europeans alike for his cruelty to anyone not of his tribe. But to his own people, he was a moral and virtuous leader, and a loving husband and father. Aharihon came to be a symbol of the conflict between American Indian and European values of the time.

Why the Owl Has Big Eyes

Raweno, the Everything-Maker, was busy making the animals. He was working on Rabbit, and Owl (still unformed) was sitting in a tree nearby, awaiting his turn.

"Whoo, whoo," Owl said. "I want a long neck like Swan's, and red feathers like Cardinal's, and a long beak like Egret's, and a crown of plumes like Heron's. I want you to make me into the most beautiful, the fastest, the most wonderful of all the birds."

"Be quiet," Raweno ordered. "Close your eyes. Don't you know no one is allowed to watch me work?"

Owl refused to obey. "Whoo, whoo," he said. "Nobody can forbid me to watch. Nobody can order me to close my eyes."

Raweno got angry. He grabbed Owl, pulled him down from his branch, stuffed his head deep into his body, shook him until his eyes grew big with fright, and pulled at his ears until they stuck up at both sides of his head.

"That will teach you," said Raweno. "Now you can't crane your neck to watch things you shouldn't watch. Now you have big ears to listen when someone tells you what not to do. Now you have big eyes—but not so big that you can watch me, because you'll be awake only at night, and I work by day. And your feathers won't be red like Cardinal's, but gray like this"—and Raweno rubbed Owl all over with mud—"as punishment for your disobedience."

Owl remains as Raweno shaped him in anger—with big eyes, a short neck, and ears sticking up on the sides of his head. And he must sleep during the day and come out only at night.

—Condensed from a traditional Iroquois story



Today, the Cayuga, Oneida, Onondaga, Seneca, Mohawk, and Tuscarora maintain headquarters in New York. Other Northeast Woodlanders are present throughout the region: the Narragansett in Rhode Island; the Pequot in Connecticut; the Micmac, Passamaquoddy, and Penobscot in Maine; and the Sac and Fox in Iowa. There are Chippewa in Minnesota, Wisconsin, Michigan, Montana, and Canada. Also in Wisconsin are Menominee, Potawatomi, and Oneida.

Southeast Woodlands

Tattoos, powerful kings, a sun god, and “Stinkards” met Europeans when they first encountered the tribes of the Southeast Woodlands.

The Southeastern tribes lived in a region bordered by the Atlantic Ocean on the east, the Gulf of Mexico on the south, the Trinity River in the west (approximately), and the Tennessee and Potomac Rivers to the north (approximately). It is an area of great diversity. The territory of these Indians included the salt-water marshes of the coastal plains, the subtropical Everglades, rich river valleys, and the forests and mountains of the southern Appalachian chain.

Some of the most advanced tribes north of Mexico lived in the Southeast Woodlands. They were skilled farmers, hunters, and builders who lived mostly in permanent villages. They used herbs and medicines that have equals in modern health care. They were conservationists who valued and took care of their natural resources. Their practices and beliefs are reflected in present-day environmental and ecological ideas.

About 150 or 200 separate groups or tribes lived in this region at the time the first European invaders found them. They spoke many different languages, some similar and some as different as Russian is from German.

Florida Indians prepare to kill an alligator.



The People

While many languages were spoken among the Indian tribes of this region, we can divide the groups roughly according to the following language families.

Muskogean: Creek (Muskogee), Seminole, Choctaw, Chickasaw, Natchez

Siouian: Catawba, Tutelo

Iroquoian: Cherokee, Tuscarora (before 1712)

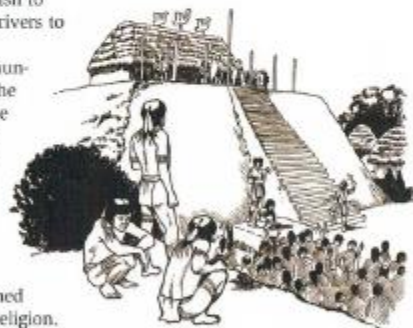
Others: Yuchi, Shawnee

Lifeways

A boy growing up among the Indians in the Southeast Woodlands probably thought he was living in paradise. All around him was beautiful country. Nature was bountiful. There were game animals to hunt—deer, alligators, turtles, rabbits, and squirrels. There were fish to catch, nuts and berries to eat, and rivers to swim and play in.

He lived in a town of several hundred people, with a king or chief, the members of the noble class, and the members of the working class. All followed the same laws and traditions. He dreamed of becoming a warrior, or perhaps a healer. In some tribes, war was the most important way for a man to gain honor and prestige. In others, a man's place might also be determined by his achievements in healing or religion.

The boy's ancestors, the Temple Mound Builders, had lived in this region long before Europeans arrived. From the Temple Mound culture had come the tradition of building houses for rulers high atop large earthen mounds. Smaller homes for priests and nobles were on terraces below the tops of the mounds. The higher up the side of the mound one lived, the higher one's rank. The king often lived atop his own mound. Villages or cities that surrounded the mounds housed merchants, artisans, soldiers, hunters, farmers, and laborers.



The commoners were called Stinkards. They did all the labor, such as farming and building mounds. The nobility—even the king himself—had to marry from the Stinkard class. When the noble died, the noble's spouse and servants were sacrificed to go with him or her to the next world.

Much of that way of life remained at the time the first Europeans came to the Southeast Woodlands. The Natchez, who lived in territory that now makes up parts of Mississippi and Louisiana, were probably the last of the Temple Mound culture. They were still living that life as late as 1682, when the French explorer La Salle made contact with them.

Their king, the Great Sun, had absolute power over his subjects. He was a true monarch, crowned with red-lasseled swan feathers and seated on a throne of feathers and furs atop his village's highest mound. Below him were priests with shaved heads, and warriors, tattooed from head to foot, strolling through the precisely laid out village watching the commoners work.

East of the Natchez lived the Creeks. The Creeks spoke a type of the Muskogean language. They were among the most widespread and powerful of Muskogean tribes. In many ways the typical Southeastern way of life is better represented by the Creeks than by the exotic Natchez.

The Creeks lived along rivers and streams coursing through the piney woods of their territory in most of present-day Georgia and Alabama. They were a confederacy of about 20,000 people who lived in at least 50 towns. They were mainly farmers, but also hunter-gatherers. Each family grew its own crops of corn, beans, squash, pumpkins, melons, and sweet potatoes. Everyone also helped with the communal fields, which fed the warriors, the poor, and guests.

Other tribes who spoke varieties of Muskogean are the Alabama, Chickasaw, Choctaw, and Seminole.

The Cherokee are related to the Iroquois. They lived in the mountains and valleys of the southern Appalachian chain, occupying a large area of land. They had villages in parts of North Carolina and western Virginia, eastern Tennessee, South Carolina, Georgia, and northern Alabama. Their name for themselves in the Iroquoian language means "real people." The name "Cherokee" probably came from their neighbors, the Creeks. *Ṙilokí* in its original form means "people of the different speech."

Besides being good farmers, the Cherokee were excellent hunters who used disguises to get close to their prey. Wearing an entire deerskin, antlers and all, and sounding an authentic deer call, they would entice the shiest deer. They brought down big game with bow and arrow. Smaller animals such as raccoons, rabbits, squirrels, and turkeys fell prey to blowguns. With these hollowed-out cane reeds, hunters could blow small wood-and-feather darts with deadly accuracy as far as 60 feet.

Dwellings

The homes of many Southeast Woodlands tribes were similar in construction. Most families had two houses—a large summer home and a smaller winter home.

The summer house was rectangular in shape. It had a peaked roof of bark or thatch, a pole framework, and cane and clay walls. The house was open to the breezes during the hot summer months. The winter home doubled as a sweat-house and was built over a pit with a cone-shaped roof of poles and earth.

The Seminole lived in a warm, wet climate of rivers and swamplands in Florida in raised houses called *chickees*. The homes were up on stilts to keep them above water.

The Natchez house was made like a giant overturned basket with no windows. Posts were sunk into the ground, then canes and reeds were woven within them. Arched saplings formed the roof, thatched with reed, canes, or grass. Then the whole house was plastered with mud and sometimes whitewashed.



One type of dwelling used by the Seminole in Florida

Some tribes formed loose confederations for protection and united in war. Towns and villages kept their own control over other matters, however.

Village and Family Life

War was a fact of life, and villages typically were surrounded by log fortifications. There was an open square or plaza in the center, with open-sided shelters where spectators could sit during ceremonies. The town's meeting house or council house was at one end of the square.

The most influential person in the village was the civil chief, who headed the council and was responsible for handling village matters. A war chief led the warriors in battle, supervised dances and games, and policed the town.

Family life centered on the clan. Clans took the names of animals—the Bear clan, the Deer clan, the Eagle clan, etc. Because the family line passed through the mother, children were members of their mother's clan, and their mother's brother acted as their "father." Their real father had responsibilities to his sisters' families, and was little more than a visitor in his wife's home.

Religion and Ritual

The Upper World, the Lower World, and This World made up the universe of the Southeastern Indians. The Upper World had order and stability and was clean and pure. In the Lower World were pollution and madness, but also fertility and invention. This World, where people, most animals, and all plants lived, was thought to be somewhere between the other worlds.

In the religion of these people, humankind's purpose in life was to find balance between the perfect order of the Upper World and the chaos of the Lower World. To keep balance, the Indians offered to the spirits gifts of tobacco, copper, beads, and other objects in many different ceremonies. The greatest deity, the sun, was represented on Earth by a sacred fire that burned throughout the year.

Southeastern Indians believed that good countered evil. They used herbs and plants to treat disease. The shaman sought the causes of disease and worked to dispel them. Priests cured illness, predicted success in war, and were in charge of the sacred village temple.

Priests also took charge of ceremonies. The important Green Corn Ceremony was held toward the end of the summer's corn harvest; it marked the start of a new year almost like a New Year's Eve celebration. Feuds were mended, communal buildings repaired, hearth fires extinguished, and houses cleaned; old cooking pottery was broken and thrown away. Villagers fasted. Prisoners were set free. The high priest lit the ceremonial new sacred fire. Then everyone danced, sang, and drank for days until a purifying bath in a nearby stream brought the celebration to an end.

Clothing, Arts, and Crafts

Southeastern Indians—men and women—favored tattoos. Their daily dress was much like that of other tribes. In the warm summer weather, men dressed in buckskin, fiber, or cloth breechcloths, and women wore skirts of buckskin or fiber. In winter, the men put on buckskin shirts and leggings, while the women donned buckskin capes. Moccasins kept their feet warm. Bear, beaver, or other skin robes kept the chill off during very cold weather.

For special occasions, men wore feathered crowns. Often they shaved their heads or plucked

their hair in patterns, although they always left a scalp lock as a challenge to the enemy to try to take. Women wore their hair long. Everyone wore jewelry and ornaments of feathers, bones, shells, and beads.

Women sometimes wove a highly prized cloth from nettle, silk grass, and mulberry bark. They made *cradleboards* (baby carriers) from swamp cane. They wove mats and fashioned colorful split-cane and wicker baskets. Pottery was common, but not ornate.



Tattoos show that this Florida man was an accomplished warrior. (Courtesy American Museum of Natural History)



Men wore feathered crowns on special occasions.



A belt of feathers worn as a skirt



Cherokee pottery

The Cherokee were known for their Booger masks (from the word *hogyman*), which were carved from wood and gourds to ward off evil spirits. Cypress logs, hollowed out, made canoes for navigating the many streams and rivers of the region.

The Cherokee used Booger masks to chase away evil and diseases.



Cherokee pipes like this one could take months to make.



Warfare

Prestige, personal glory, obtaining slaves, getting revenge, righting wrongs—and sometimes, just the thrill of the battle—were reasons for war for Southeastern Indians. Once war was decided on, preparations were turned over to the Great Warrior, the chief of war. With the veterans of earlier conflicts to help him, he would rally the young volunteers for combat (no one was ordered to fight). Speeches, war songs sung by the women, fasting, and purifying drinks all helped prepare the warriors.

Those in the war party would paint their bodies red and black, then arm themselves with weapons such as pikes, lances, darts, slings, clubs, and bows and arrows. Stealthily creeping up on the enemy, they would surround the foe, cutting off all possibility of retreat. Then, howling and screeching, the warriors would launch a terrifying rain of arrows, clubs, and lances.

No mercy was given. Entire villages might be wiped out; scalps were taken, and sometimes a head or two was carried off as a war trophy.

The fate of captives was uncertain. They might be adopted and treated as kinsfolk or kept as slaves. A great and feared enemy warrior, however, could expect to be put to death.

Lacrosse: War's "Little Brother"

No Indian game aroused more enthusiasm than *istaboli*, which we know today as lacrosse and play in a very modified way. In its bloody original version, the game, sometimes called *Indian stickball*, was nicknamed "the little brother of war."



Major lacrosse games drew players and spectators from neighboring villages for miles around. Sometimes as many as a thousand spectators would show up for the action. Formal invitations went out to the opposition.

The playing field was carefully laid out. Spectators brought furs, skins, and trinkets to bet on the game's outcome. Pregame ceremonies reached a climax the night before the match, when the 75 or so members of each team painted their bodies, drank sacred medicine, danced, and sang.

The purpose of the game was to toss a leather ball between goalposts, using 3-foot-long rackets or sticks that had curved and webbed ends. Each player used two rackets to catch and throw the ball. Players could not touch the ball with their hands or use the sticks to fight, but almost any other activity was fair. Tripping, hitting, tackling, stomping, and piling on one another were part of the game. Broken bones, severe injuries, and even deaths resulting from the frenzy were not uncommon.

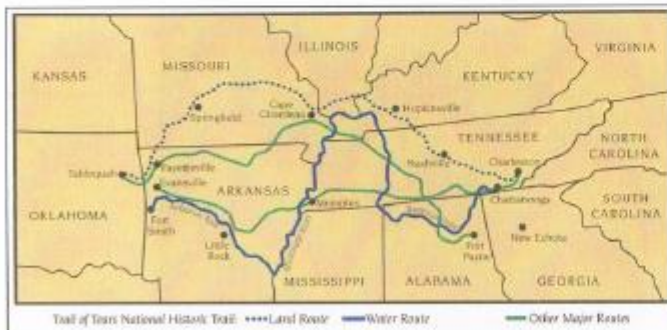
Medicine men would act as coaches for the game. But they used incantations, rather than game strategy, to get their team to score the 100 points needed to win.

The Five Civilized Tribes and the Trail of Tears

Nomatives named the Chickasaw, Choctaw, Cherokee, Creek, and Seminole Indians the "Five Civilized Tribes." These tribes adopted many European customs—which, to non-Indians, seemed "civilized."

The tribes went through difficult times after they first encountered European explorers in the 1500s. By the early 1700s, their populations had dropped about 75 percent. But despite many setbacks, including wars, starvation, and disease, they rebuilt their lives so that by the early 1800s they lived much like the Southern whites. They owned plantations and slaves and had learned new farming methods and the white people's ways of doing business. They established a republican form of government. Sequoyah, a Cherokee, produced a written version of the Cherokee language—the first written Indian language—so that his people could have a written constitution.

However, they were still not well-treated by whites. A forced removal—the Trail of Tears—took place in 1838. Fifteen thousand Cherokees were forced from their lands so that whites could get the gold discovered on Cherokee property. President Andrew Jackson ordered the Indians moved nearly 1,000 miles to Indian Territory, in what is now the state of Oklahoma.



They were not allowed to take clothing, food stores, or personal belongings. As many as 4,000 Cherokees died during the terrible forced marches over a route they came to call *nunna-da-ul-tsun-yi*: "the trail on which they cried." More died of epidemics and starvation when they reached the Indian Territory. Others of the "Five Civilized Tribes" also lost their homelands during this shameful period in American history.

Indian Territory was supposed to be a permanent home for the different tribes. But over the next few decades, settlers poured onto Indian land in Oklahoma and it became theirs. By the turn of the 20th century, the Indians had lost most of the territory that was first promised to them.

In recent years, the federal government has tried to make up for some of the losses these tribes suffered. Many Indians themselves have sought cultural renewal and tribal unity as the best path to a better life.

The Cherokee, Chickasaw, Choctaw, Creek, and Seminole nations have headquarters and tribal heritage centers in Oklahoma today. Some groups avoided forced removal during the 1830s, and their descendants still live in the Southeast. These include the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians in North Carolina, the Mississippi Band of Choctaws, the Poarch Band of Creek Indians in Alabama, and the Seminole Tribe of Florida.



The Trail of Tears

Great Plains



Arapaho dog dancer (Courtesy American Museum of Natural History)

When most Americans imagine how Indians look, dress, and act, they think of the Great Plains Indians. Why is this group the most famous of all?

The Great Plains stretch westward from the Mississippi Valley to the Rocky Mountains, and south from present-day Canada to central Texas. The Plains Indians had not lived in the area long before their first contacts with the Spanish in the 1500s. Ancient Indians had once lived there but had moved away before the 13th century. When tribes started moving back, the first were probably farmers. Later groups became nomadic, with a lifestyle centered on buffalo hunting.

When settlers started moving westward in the 19th century, the Plains Indians fought them. Those final, desperate Indian wars are portrayed over and over in books, movies, and television shows.

Perhaps this explains why the Plains Indian image is everywhere. The Indian-head nickel, the buffalo hunter, Sitting Bull in his feather headdress, Conestoga wagons, mustang ponies—all evoke the era of America's westward expansion.



On the Great Plains, various Indian tribes developed a hunting lifestyle based on the horse and the buffalo.

Some of the Plains tribes encountered by European explorers included the following.

Village tribes: Mandan, Hidatsa, Iowa, Oto, Missouri, Omaha, Ponca, Osage, Kansa, Wichita, Caddo, Arikara, Pawnee

Hunting tribes: Dakota (Santee and Yankton Sioux), Lakota, (Teton Sioux), Assiniboine, Crow, Blackfoot, Cheyenne, Arapaho, Sarsi, Plains Apache, Plains Cree, Comanche, Kiowa

The People

The Great Plains is a huge area. Much of it is treeless grassland that stretches like a vast ocean for thousands of miles. In some the prairies are interrupted by highlands, such as the Ozarks of Missouri and Arkansas, the Black Hills of South Dakota and Wyoming, and the badlands of South Dakota.

Into this enormous area came the different Plains tribes. Some were looking for fertile farmland in the river valleys. Others had been pushed from their homelands by the newcomers from Europe and were seeking places to live. Teeming herds of buffalo and other wild game lured those who lived by hunting.



Buffalo-hide shield with snapping turtle design, probably Mandan

The Horse People

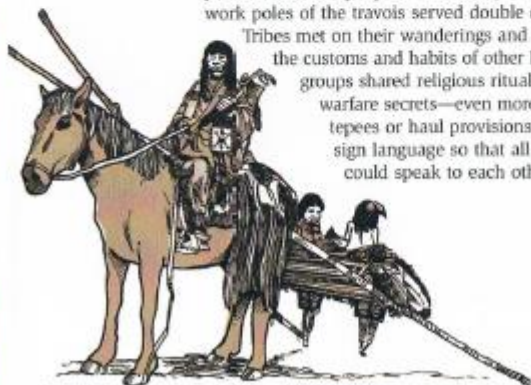
Plains Indians developed ingenious ways to hunt and catch buffalo. One way was to drive whole herds over cliffs. Or they would trap the beasts by setting fire to the grass around a herd, leaving only one escape route where hunters waited with bows and arrows and lances. They were highly successful buffalo hunters—and at first they did it all on foot.

Spaniards brought horses to the New World in the 1500s. (Prehistoric horses, native to North America, had died out thousands of years earlier.) By the early 1700s, when the Plains tribes got the horse, a new way of life opened to them: a nomadic life of hunting buffalo. On horseback, they could travel great distances searching for game, carrying their possessions with them. Although it was no longer necessary, not all Indians gave up farming. But even the farmers of the village tribes took to the range, returning home at planting and harvest time and during the winter.

Before they had horses, Plains Indians carried their possessions on their backs, or on the backs of their dogs. They used a sledlike device called a *travois*. Two poles were tied together at one end, which rested on the dog's shoulders. Hide stretched between the trailing poles provided a pallet for carrying things. Sometimes women pulled travois.

Horses could pull giant travois big enough to carry many possessions, and people, if necessary. The long wooden framework poles of the travois served double duty as tepee poles.

Tribes met on their wanderings and gradually, they adopted the customs and habits of other Indian bands. The groups shared religious rituals, hunting methods, warfare secrets—even more efficient ways to build tepees or haul provisions. They devised a hand sign language so that all the different groups could speak to each other.



A Blackfoot woman, with her children riding a travois

Lifeways

Through most of the year, the nomadic tribes foraged and hunted in small bands. In cold weather they lived off the fruits of the summer hunt, occasionally tracking elk, deer, or other game through the snow.

Winter could bring hunger, but it also could be a fun time. Buffalo ribs lashed together made excellent sleds. Games and contests involved both children and adults. Dancing and especially singing accompanied most activities. The women sang high, trilling songs that inspired courage and excitement.

Seminomadic bands would return from the summer hunt to their stockaded villages in time for the fall harvest. Then they settled into their lodges to begin preparations for spring, when crops would be planted again.

Summer was a time for games, trading, courtship, tribal reunions, and ceremonies. The most important ceremony was the Sun Dance, as the Sioux called it. The Cheyenne called it the New Life Lodge, and the Ponca the Mystery Dance.

The Sioux Sun Dance took 12 days. During the first four days, while the various bands assembled, people renewed family ties, swapped stories, and began courtships; almost everyone was in a mood of high excitement. During the next four days, assistants to the shamans, or medicine men, ritually prepared themselves for the following four days of sacred ceremonies. On the final day of the Sun Dance, some of the men volunteered to have bits of flesh cut from their bodies. Or they agreed to be skewered and hung from a pole until their skin ripped and freed them. Their pain was a sacrifice to honor and thank the Great Spirit.

The great "surround," an annual tribal hunt, was another important ritual. This solemn affair involved several hundred men and their families. Prayers and many rituals preceded the hunt. Discipline was strictly enforced; every hunter had assigned tasks, and members of a military society made sure no one tried to hunt by himself. The discipline imposed during the group hunt was rare; Plains Indians prized their independence and resisted strict authority.

When a herd of buffalo was located, the hunters stripped themselves and their horses of any clothing or gear that might restrict movement or make noise. The hunters rode their ponies into the midst of the huge herd. Dodging the buffaloes' powerful horns, they forced the beasts into a circle where they killed them with bows and arrows or lances.

Different tribes had different rituals, but the purpose of the Sun Dance was the same: to give thanks for blessings bestowed and to ask that the coming year also be blessed. Through ceremony, the people sought to renew nature, keep the buffalo plentiful, bring victory in battle, make marriages successful, heal the sick, and settle quarrels.

The Gift of the Buffalo

The buffalo was like a general store on hooves. Plains Indians made use of nearly every inch of these giant prairie beasts.

Buffalo meat was the staple food of the Plains tribes. They ate the liver and kidneys raw. Sweet marrow and roasted intestines were favorites, but the greatest delicacies were the tongue and flesh from the hump. Following a successful hunt, after everyone had eaten their fill of roasted and raw flesh, the rest of the meat was dried for jerky. Or it might be mixed with berries and fat to make *pemmican*, a trail food.

Skins had many uses. The soft skin of a calf swaddled a newborn baby. Hides were sewn together to make tepee covers and hung inside for curtains. A single hide could make a round, lightweight bullboat. Parts of hides became drums and rattles and battle shields. Specially prepared hides were used to fashion clothing, and long-haired winter skins made excellent cold-weather blankets and robes. Tails were flywhisks. Rawhide made strings and lassos from which the warriors fashioned tools and weapons.

Buffalo hair was woven into strong rope or stuffed loose into cradleboards, gloves, moccasins, saddle pads, and pillows. Rolled tightly, it made an excellent ball for games.

Bones became saddletrees and tools of various kinds. Ribs tied together with rawhide made sleds. The skull was used in certain religious ceremonies, as were rattles made from the animal's hooves. The buffalo paunch (stomach) became a cooking pot. It was suspended from four sticks and filled with water, wild turnips and onions, and meat; then hot rocks were dropped in to cook the stew.

Indians suitably honored the buffalo with special ceremonies. Tribal leaders often took names associated with the buffalo to give them added status.



The conclusion of a successful hunt was a joyous occasion. Everyone—even the dogs—ate their fill. Then the exhausted revelers would rest for a few hours before beginning a night of celebration and dance.

In general, the Plains Indians lived without need of a strong central government. Men and women were free to go their own way. There were no hereditary or elected governors, and rarely did a chief have the power to give orders to others. The title "chief" was usually awarded to an individual honored for bravery, wisdom, and powers of persuasion.

Some tribes traced family lineages through the paternal (male) line. The Omaha, for example, were divided into 10 paternal clans. Others traced descent from a common mother. Some tribes had no clans. But almost every tribe had military societies that played important roles in tribal life. Society members might be responsible for guarding camps during wartime, keeping discipline during hunts, or organizing traditional feasts, dances, and games.

Romance and courtship were much the same as in any other society. Boys and girls flirted, but a girl's virtue was closely guarded. The parents arranged most marriages, although sometimes couples eloped.

Many warriors died each year during buffalo hunts and wars. Because women outnumbered men, many tribes allowed *polygamy* (the practice of having more than one wife or husband at the same time). A man could have several wives to bear children and to help with the workload of the camp.

Babies were eagerly awaited, and great joy and celebration greeted newborns. Children enjoyed a free and secure life. A Sioux child had a second "mother" who took over much of his or her care so that the birth mother would not spoil the child.

Among the most unusual societies were the Hidatsa Dogs, known as the "Contraries." They did everything the opposite of what they were asked or expected to do. They rolled in the dust to "wash" and jumped in water to "dry off." They said yes when they meant no, and attacked when they were told to flee in battle. Does the tribe you are studying have an unusual society like the Contraries?

Men did not "buy" their wives, as is widely believed.

A suitor gave the girl's family a gift of horses. The gift was not to buy her—women were not property that could be bought—but to show his love for her and to prove that he could be a good provider.

Dwellings

While the Plains tribes had different types of dwellings, the tepee is the one most associated with this group. To nomadic tribes such as the Blackfoot or Cheyenne, it was the only home they knew.

The tepee made an ideal dwelling for nomads. A simple structure, it could be put up and taken down quickly and was lightweight and easily transported for a life of following the great herds of buffalo.

The tepee was more than a shelter or home: It was a sacred place. The floor symbolized the earth, and the walls the sky. The tepee's base was a circle, a sacred shape that symbolized how all of life is interconnected. Sacred objects lined the walls, along with family possessions and the necessities of daily life. The inner walls were painted with brightly colored figures and shapes that referred to family histories, spirit beings, ancestors, and battle honors. A small altar was also a part of every tepee.

To put up a tepee at a new campsite, several of the long poles that also served as travois shafts were lashed together at the top. The poles, stood on end, slanted outward from the top lashing to form a cone-shaped structure. Other poles were leaned against the framework to strengthen it. The woman who owned the tepee covered the pole framework with buffalo hides sewn together and secured by wooden pins. An opening at the top provided a smoke hole, and the flaps could be left open or closed, depending on the weather. During the winter, more skins were hung on the inside walls to insulate from the cold.

Nearly every Plains tribe used tepees when it was on the move. Some tribes, like the Mandan and the Hidatsa, continued to farm and had permanent homes as well.



Plains buffalo-hide tepee



A Mandan earthlodge could hold 40 to 60 people.

Their huge lodges were made of earth and grass, and housed from 40 to 60 people. Above the firepit in the center was a smoke hole in the roof. The sacred place was in the rear of the lodge. Food platforms, storage pits, sleeping areas, and a stall or two for horses lined the walls of the structure.

Religion and Ritual

Everything in life had supernatural aspects and religious meaning for the Plains Indians. Sky, sun, and wind were all part of the Great Spirit and were objects of reverence. The Indians drew power from nature, from animals or other living things.

Each individual practiced religion in a unique way. Visions were an important part of the religious experience. A vision was considered a direct encounter with the Great Mystery Power. Both men and women went on vision quests when they felt the need for help from the spirit powers. A vision quest was a boy's initiation into manhood. A man went on vision quests to seek help before a hunt or raid, or at other important times in his life.

The sacred pipe was an important element in Plains Indian rituals. Most tribesmen owned their own pipes. Some pipes were owned by a tribe as a whole and were used in many ceremonies. Although often called peace pipes, they were more than a symbol of peace and hospitality. Pipes were ceremoniously smoked when preparing for battle, when trading goods and hostages, before rituals and dances, and as part of some medical treatments.

Beautifully crafted, the pipestem was of ash or sumac wood and the bowl fashioned from red pipestone found in a quarry in present-day Minnesota. For many generations, all Indians could mine pipestone without fear of harm from their enemies, for the quarry was neutral territory.

Some especially talented pipemakers carved pipes in the form of birds or animals. Feathers, quills or beads, fur, and horsehair decorated sacred pipes. Tobacco and other plants were smoked.

Many of the Plains Indians' possessions had sacred meaning. So did some dances and songs. If you are studying a Plains tribe, learn which of their possessions, songs, dances, and games are sacred. Take care not to misuse anything of religious significance.

The Sacred Pipe

"All the meanings of moral duty, ethics, religious, and spiritual conceptions were symbolized in the pipe," wrote Chief Standing Bear in the book *Land of the Spotted Eagle* (1933). The pipe "signified brotherhood, peace, and the perfection of Wakan Tanka (the Great Spirit), and to the Lakota the pipe stood for that which the Bible, church, state, and flag, all combined, represented to the mind of the white man."

Plains Indian culture has changed drastically since the era of the free-ranging buffalo herds, but pipe carving is by no means a lost art. Carvers of Indian ancestry continue to quarry the pipestone, and pipes today are appreciated as artworks as well as for their ritual value and ceremonial use. Modern carvers carry on an age-old tradition, ever-changing but firmly rooted in the past.

Clothing, Arts, and Crafts



Arapaho moccasins

Plains Indian clothing was often artfully and elaborately decorated. Buffalo, elk, deer, and occasionally other animal skins were used to make clothes.

A loincloth or breechcloth and moccasins were summer dress for men. Tanned-hide leggings might be worn, and in the colder regions, shirts were also a part of everyday dress.



Feathered headdress, worn for special occasions only

Women wore moccasins and one-piece dresses of softened buffalo hide. Sometimes they wore kneelength leggings. Deerskin skirts and capes were common in Osage and Pawnee villages and Cheyenne encampments. Elk teeth, natural paints, porcupine quills, beads, and shells decorated clothes. During the winter, fur robes, caps, and headbands added warmth.

Ceremonial clothing differed from tribe to tribe, but such items were luxuriously decorated with ermine fur, feathers, and other embellishments. (If you have chosen a requirement that involves decorating an object or item of clothing with feathers, be sure not to use feathers from an endangered species.)

Only a few men—those who had earned the privilege in warfare—wore an eagle-feather headdress, or warbonnet. The longest warbonnets were worn by war chiefs, and the number and kind of feathers in the bonnet represented the warrior's exploits. Feather bonnets and decorative caps were used for ceremonies and social affairs.

The life of the Plains Indians was often harsh. Yet they softened it with finely crafted tools and highly decorated clothing and other articles.

Among the tribes of the grasslands, painting, beadwork, and porcupine-quill embroidery were prized skills. Women took pride in the tepees they sewed and the handwork they made. A woman was honored for her artistry.

The Plains Indians decorated with natural paints—yellow from bullberries, black from burnt wood, green from plants, white from certain clays. They painted containers, buffalo robes, tepee skins, their horses, and themselves.

The insides of lodges or tepees—especially the dwelling of a tribal chief—were painted with colorful murals. Their designs came from the visions of the owner. The Crow Indians outfitted their horses with saddles, bridles, collars, and blankets that were richly decorated and embellished with beadwork and embroidery.



Sioux child's coat, made of leather with beaded floral motifs