

Women spent their "leisure" time helping to sew together buffalo skins for tepees; braiding bags, scarves, and belts; quilling or beading items; and making many of the tools needed for everyday life on the Plains. Women sewed with sinew. Cheyenne, Arapaho, and Dakota women decorated pouches, clothes, moccasins, and other objects with porcupine quills dyed yellow, black, red, green, and blue.

A Crow horse-bridle ornament, made from circles of yarn sewn on buckskin, was worn fastened to the front of a decorated bridle.



### Warfare

Small bands of warriors made hit-and-run raids on other tribes. Revenge, capturing horses, and most of all, counting coups, or personal honors, and earning glory in battle were reasons for warfare.

In the face of hopeless odds, a war party was expected to pull out quickly to avoid fatalities; but once in the battle, warriors were expected to fight to victory or death.

Standing in the midst of a raging battle and not giving an inch to the enemy, rescuing a comrade, or counting coups were ways to earn battle honors. (Touching an armed enemy with a coup stick was considered much braver than killing him.)

Relations between the Plains tribes and the early settlers were not unfriendly, at first. But as the number of wagon trains grew, and thousands of settlers began pouring across Indian land, warfare between the two groups became unavoidable.

The gold rushes of the 1850s and '60s brought thousands more settlers and soldiers onto the Plains. Forts and towns sprang up. The newcomers wanted more and more of what the



A Sioux shield of painted rawhide

Indians controlled: land for farms, unending miles of grasslands for grazing cattle and sheep, and other natural resources. The angry Indians retaliated by raiding settlements, and taking livestock for food, horses for mounts, captives for slaves, and scalps for revenge.

Indian warfare became increasingly sophisticated. War parties grew larger, and battles were bigger and more frequent. While the Indians fought bravely, in the end they could not match the superior firepower and strength of the United States Army.

The near-extinction of the buffalo was a heavy blow to the Plains tribes. In 1800, there were some 60 million buffalo on the Plains. During the 1860s, whites slaughtered huge herds for sport while riding across the prairies on the newly completed rail lines. The 1870s brought professional buffalo hunters seeking the \$3 bounty on each hide. An efficient group of hunters could shoot and skin 50 buffalo a day. By the turn of the 20th century, fewer than 1,000 buffalo survived.

### Little Bighorn and Wounded Knee

Of all the confrontations between U.S. troops and Indians, the Battle of the Little Bighorn and the massacre at Wounded Knee are the most famous. Sitting Bull, a great warrior of the Plains Indians, will forever be connected to both events.

In June 1876 on the banks of the Little Bighorn River, the U.S. Army's cavalry suffered its most crushing defeat of the Indian wars. The battle is also known as Custer's Last Stand. History has not treated Lt. Col. George Armstrong Custer kindly. Some historians say his ambition and vanity caused the death of some 250 troopers.

Custer's orders were to scout out a large encampment of Indians but not to engage them in battle until reinforcements came. Scouts estimated that as many as 3,000 Sioux and Cheyenne warriors were at the camp.

Custer did not wait for reinforcements. Dividing his regiment of 600 men into several smaller groups, he ordered an attack. In the battles that followed, Custer and at least 250 soldiers were killed. It was the Indians' greatest and last victory.



Lt. Col. George A. Custer



Sitting Bull

Sitting Bull was a medicine man, or spiritual leader, of the Hunkpapa band of the Teton Sioux. Historians believe Sitting Bull was not at the battle, but he had a vision that white soldiers would fall "like grasshoppers" into the Indian camp. His vision was interpreted as a sign of victory; the warriors went into battle confident that they would win.

After Little Bighorn, Sitting Bull led his people into Canada but surrendered to U.S. troops in 1881. He and his followers were confined to a reservation in the Dakotas. It was a time of despair and near starvation.

The Ghost Dance religion gave them hope. It promised that the world would soon end and then come back as the old world the Indians had once known. All Indians, including the dead, would inherit the new Earth. Buffalo would again cover the plain, and whites would disappear. The religion quickly became popular. Indians performed the Ghost Dance, a simple ceremony of dancing and chanting, to prepare for the coming age.

Reservation officials banned the dance, believing it encouraged rebellion. The Indians held the forbidden ceremonies in secret and invited Sitting Bull to join them. In 1890, Sitting Bull was arrested on a charge of rebellion. When he resisted the soldiers, a fight broke out, and 14 people, including Sitting Bull, lay dead or dying.

His followers fled the reservation but were quickly caught by soldiers. The Indians surrendered at a place called Wounded Knee, in South Dakota. When someone's gun accidentally went off, the soldiers opened fire on the Indian camp. As many as 300 unarmed men, women, and children were massacred.

Wounded Knee symbolized the way American Indians historically were treated by whites. The site lies on the Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota.

Today, about half of all Sioux live on reservations in the northern plains. Other Sioux live in urban areas throughout the United States.

## Why the Lakota Wear the Eagle Plume

A long time ago when the world was freshly made, Unktehi the water monster caused a great flood. The waters rose over the new earth until everything was flooded except for one hill. The people climbed the hill, trying to save themselves, but then the water swept over that hill, too.

The waves smashed rocks down upon the people. They were killed, and all their blood jelled into one big pool. The blood turned to pipestone and created the sacred red pipestone quarry, the grave of those ancient ones. That is why the pipe, made of the red rock, is sacred. Its red bowl is the blood of the ancestors, its stem is the backbone of those people long dead, the smoke rising from the pipe is their breath. The pipe comes alive when it is used in a ceremony; power flows from it.

When all the people were killed many generations ago, only one young woman survived. As the water swept over the hill where the people sought refuge, a big spotted eagle, Wanblee Galeshka, flew down and let the young woman grab hold of his feet. With her hanging on, he flew to the top of the highest stone pinnacle in the Black Hills. That smooth, steep, needlelike rock was the eagle's home, and it was the only spot not flooded. Maybe that rock was not in the Black Hills; maybe it was Devil's Tower, as white men call it, in Wyoming. Both places are sacred.

Wanblee made the young woman his wife. She bore him twins, a boy and a girl. The children were born on the high stone pinnacle.

When the floodwaters finally subsided, Wanblee helped the children and their mother down from his rock and put them on the earth. He told them: "Be a nation; become a great Nation, the Lakota Oyate"—the eagle nation.

So the Lakota are descended from the eagle. The eagle is the wisest of birds. He is the Great Spirit's messenger; he is a great warrior. That is why the Lakota wear the eagle plume.

—A Brule Sioux story, adapted from "How the Sioux Came to Be," as told by Lame Deer, a Sioux medicine man, to Richard Erdoes (American Indian Myths and Legends, Pantheon, 1984)

## Southwest

Soaring mountains and deep canyons, the Painted Desert, the Grand Canyon, pine and piñon forests, mesas, majestic rivers, sagebrush, cactus, droughts followed by floods, scorching days, freezing nights: This is the Southwest. It is a land of contrasts, a land of enchantment, a homeland of both the village-dwelling Hopi farmers and the mobile Apache nomads.

### The Pueblo Peoples

The Pueblo peoples are southwestern American Indians who live in a style of stone or adobe house called a pueblo. *Pueblo* means "village" in Spanish. The term is used not only to describe the house but also as a general name for the people who live in such houses and for their villages. The pueblos of New Mexico are the oldest continuously lived-in communities in the United States.

The Southwest takes in the present-day states of New Mexico and Arizona and parts of western Texas and southern Colorado. Some major tribes of the Southwest are:

**Pueblo peoples:** Hopi, Zuni, Taos, San Felipe, Santo Domingo, Acoma, Laguna

**Nomadic tribes:** Navajo (Diné, also spelled Dineh or Dene), Southern Plains Apache (Llanero, Mescalero, Jicarilla, Lipan), Western Plains Apache (Tonto, White Mountain, San Carlos, Cibecue)

**Farmers of the desert:** O'odham ("Pima"), Tohono O'odham ("Papago"), Yavapai, Havasupai, Yaqui

Some tribes, like the Hopi and the Zuni, live on the Colorado Plateau, an area of high hills, deep valleys, and flat mesas. The homeland of other Pueblo tribes, like the Santo Domingo and San Felipe, is along the Rio Grande, a great river that flows through much of the Southwest into the Gulf of Mexico.

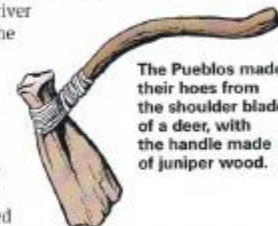
The Pueblo tribes have long been farmers, cultivating corn of various colors (have you ever eaten blue corn?), squash, beans, sunflowers, and cotton. Hundreds of years ago they domesticated the wild turkey and dog, and occasionally hunted deer, antelope, and rabbits. They traded their goods and extra food and sometimes traveled many miles to trade with other pueblos.

In the spring, the men were responsible for hoeing and tilling the soil and planting the crops, although everyone helped in the fields. In some areas, they built miles of irrigation ditches leading from the banks of rivers to their fields to water their crops. During a sacred rain dance ceremony, they prayed for good rains to bring a bountiful harvest. At harvest time, the corn was picked, husked, and sorted. Most of it was ground into meal; the rest was eaten fresh or stored for future use.

### Dwellings

Pueblos clustered at the bottoms of wide canyons, or atop towering buttes and mesas covered with piñon pine and juniper trees. Others rose from the flat desert terrain and forbidding cliffs.

The pueblo-style home is unique among Indian dwellings. A pueblo was as high as five stories, and many families lived in a building, much like modern-day apartments. The flat roof of one level was the floor and front courtyard of another level. Ladders connected the different levels. Early pueblos had no doors or windows, making them easier to defend from attack. Families entered their apartments through holes in the roofs.



The Pueblos made their hoes from the shoulder blade of a deer, with the handle made of juniper wood.



Southwestern adobe pueblo

Pueblos were made of different types of materials. The Hopi and the Zuni used stones that were mortared together and surfaced with plaster. Rio Grande Indians constructed their homes from adobe bricks of sun-dried earth mixed with straw. They stretched log beams across the roofs and covered them with poles, brush, and plaster. Sometimes the beams projected beyond the walls and were used as pegs to hang food for drying. The women owned the apartments and all of the furnishings.

Pueblos faced the village streets and plazas. In the central plaza of the village, the people dug *kivas*, underground chambers where men conducted sacred rituals. Men also used the *kivas* as clubhouses, and women usually were not allowed to enter.

### Religion and Family Life

The stone-walled *kivas* were the spiritual and physical center of the village. Sunk deep in the ground, *kivas* symbolize the World Below, from which come the spirits said to inhabit all things. All of the Pueblo *kiva* groups had similar religions, but the *kiva* usually is associated with Hopi religion and ritual.

Religious ceremonies were conducted year-round, with offerings of cornmeal and prayer sticks placed on altars in secret rites to bring rain and good crops. *Kachinas*, or guardian spirits, were recreated in wooden masks and dolls. Masked *kachina* dancers performed at many festivals and rituals. In the summer, the Hopi held a 16-day festival called the Niman *Kachina*, featuring many rain dances and celebrating the return of the spirits to the World Below.

A *kachina* doll is not a child's toy but a likeness of a supernatural being meant to help Hopi and Zuni children learn the different *kachinas*.



Hopi *kachina* doll

The most spectacular of rites, the Snake Ceremonial of late August, was performed with live snakes wrapped around the dancers' arms and legs, and held in their mouths. Snakes, with their zigzag movements, symbolized lightning and thunderstorms.

The senior chief of the village presided over the council of chiefs, which led the affairs of the community. The men of the *kivas* and the many religious and healing societies dominated the ceremonial life of the village. Women were the property holders, owning not only the houses but also the crops and the seeds that would be planted to grow new crops. The clan was the basic unit of Pueblo society, and children belonged to their mother's clan. The clans also helped direct religious events and make village decisions.

### Clothing, Arts, and Crafts

By 1540, Pueblo Indians had already perfected the skill of spinning yarn from cotton to weave into cloth. When Spanish explorers introduced the sheep to their culture, they also mastered the art of spinning and weaving wool.

Among the Hopi, it was the responsibility of each man to supply his family's clothing. Men wore short kilts of cotton. Often they used rabbit fur for headbands to hold down their bangs and to tie their long hair in a knot at the back of the neck. Women wore a blanket dress—a calf-length wrap of cotton cloth draped under one arm and fastened to the other shoulder. Both sexes wore leggings of deerskin.



Pueblo pottery jar

The Pueblo Indians are excellent artisans. Today, their skillfully crafted pottery, jewelry, weavings, baskets, and other art forms are eagerly sought by collectors and art lovers. Traditionally, basketmaking and pottery were women's tasks; weaving was men's work among the Hopi.



Hopi gourd rattle with painted design, wooden handle, and feather decorations

### Warfare

The Pueblo peoples seldom waged war. When they did, it was to preserve peace, or to protect their villages from Navajo and Apache raiding parties, or later, from Spanish soldiers. In fact, the Hopi name comes from their word *hópi*, which means "peaceful."

When war was unavoidable, Hopi men held three nights of rituals before setting out on surprise raids. Their biggest war was against the Spaniards. When the invading Spanish tried to eliminate all kachina worship, the Hopi rebelled. They joined the Rio Grande pueblos in the Pueblo Revolt of 1680 and destroyed the Christian missions built by the Spaniards. The Rio Grande pueblos were later recaptured, but not the Hopi. They remained free and kept their culture despite Spanish and U.S. domination. Today, about 7,000 Hopi live on tribal lands in Arizona.

### The Nomads

The Apache and the Navajo were once a single people who spoke the singsong Athapaskan language. The name "Apache" comes from the Zuni word *apacha*, which means "enemy." The name "Navajo" comes from a Pueblo Indian word that refers to an area of land in the Southwest. In their own language, the Navajo are the *Diné*, meaning "the people," and their homeland is the *Dinékaah*.

### The Apache

The Apache lived a nomadic life, roaming widely over the Southwest. They hunted deer and rabbits and foraged for plant foods such as cactus and mesquite seeds. When food became scarce in their rugged, desert land, they raided neighboring tribes. The Chiricahua Apache raided into northern Mexico, Arizona, and New Mexico from their strongholds in Arizona's Dragoon Mountains.

Apache lifestyles were flexible, adopting from other Indian tribes they contacted. The Western Apaches took up farming from the Hopi. The Jicarilla Apaches of northern New Mexico became buffalo hunters like their Plains Indians neighbors.

The Apache fiddle, or "the wood that sings," was crafted from a yucca stalk and played with a bow made of wood and sinew.

The Apache lived in small encampments. Home was the wickiup, a domed structure made of a pole framework covered with brush, grass, or reed mats. It could be erected quickly.

There was no central tribal government. Bands had headmen or informal leaders. A leader's authority came mainly from the strength of his personality and his success in warfare. Each band or local group was made up of several extended families.

Women, their female relatives, and children were at the center of the family structure. Apache women were excellent basketmakers who wove intricately designed baskets in many shapes and sizes. They made pottery and buckskin clothing.

The Apache worshiped Ussen, the Giver of Life, and often sought the help of mountain spirits known as Gans, which were especially important in Apache ceremonies. The men painted their bodies and dressed in elaborate costumes of kilts, black masks, and tall wooden-slat head-dresses for these ceremonies, which were presided over by shamans.

More than 25,000 Apache live in the Southwest today. The San Carlos, Tonto, and White Mountain Apache tribes are in eastern Arizona. The Chiricahua, the Mescalero, and the Lipan are in southern New Mexico; the Jicarilla, in north central New Mexico.



This 2-foot-high Apache basket was used for storing food.

The Apache went to war against the U.S. Army in the 1860s, led by Cochise, a chief of the Chiricahua tribe. After the death of Cochise in 1874, another Apache leader, Geronimo, took up the fight. Geronimo (his original name was Goyathlay, meaning "One who yawns") led warriors on raids against the army and against settlers coming into the area. He was arrested, but escaped and went on fighting until he finally surrendered in 1887. Geronimo was still a prisoner of war when he died in 1909 at Fort Sill, Oklahoma.



Twenty to 30 poles, about a foot apart, and bundles of grass were used to build a wickiup.



The Navajo are famous for their skill as weavers of fine woolen rugs like this one.

Navajo weaving is among the finest examples of native craft. Navajo artisans also excel in jewelry making.

### The Navajo

The Navajo—like their kinsfolk, the Apache—lived a largely nomadic lifestyle. Eventually, the Navajo adopted a settled way of life. They became planters of corn, beans, and squash. With sheep and horses they got from the Spaniards, the Navajo became excellent sheep ranchers and herders. They spun and dyed the wool from their sheep and wove it into fine blankets and cloth with complex designs.

The Navajo developed an art form known as sand painting, used in ceremonies to banish evil and heal the sick. Art and religion are linked in the Navajo way. Art could draw one closer to ancestors, affect the weather, or cure the sick. In the Navajo religion, Changing Woman (the Earth Mother), the Hero Twins, and Coyote the trickster are important spirit-beings, or Holy People. There are evil ghosts, too, that cause sickness and accidents.

Hundreds of songs or chants tell stories from Navajo tradition. The Evil Way chant, for example, is a defense against witchcraft. The Blessing Way is sung for health and harmony in family life.

## The Navajo Code Talkers

During World War II, the United States military urgently needed a secret code that the enemy could not crack. Americans were fighting the Japanese, who were skilled code-breakers and had a group of well-trained, English-speaking soldiers who could decipher the messages the American military sent.

The solution: Use a Native American language for sending secret messages. Choctaw Indians had been "code talkers" in World War I. That tradition continued in the 1940s, when the hundreds of Navajo code talkers who served with the U.S. Marines used their complex native language to create an unbreakable code. They used Navajo words to represent terms that did not exist in the Navajo language. A submarine, for example, was an "iron fish" (*besh-lo*). A fighter plane became a "hummingbird" (*dah-he-tih-hi*). And America was "our mother" (*Ne-he-mah*).

At Iwo Jima, six Navajo code talkers worked around the clock for the first two days of the battle. Those six sent and received more than 800 messages, all without an error. The Japanese were baffled; they never broke the Navajo code.

The code talkers' skill and courage saved American lives and helped the United States win the war. Only recently, however, have the code talkers been publicly recognized and honored, because the Navajo language remained potentially valuable as a secret code long after World War II ended.

Other Native Americans have served as code talkers during World Wars I and II. It is estimated that at least 17 tribes have contributed code talkers, including the Cherokee, Cheyenne, Choctaw, Comanche, Osage, and Yankton Sioux in World War I; and the Chippewa, Choctaw, Comanche, Creek, Hopi, Kiowa, Menominee, Muscogee-Seminole, Navajo, Oneida, Pawnee, Sac and Fox, and Sioux (Lakota and Dakota dialects) in World War II.



A Navajo hogan made of logs, small branches, brush, cedar bark, and earth

Traditional Navajo society had no villages, only solitary family encampments. As the Navajo began raising sheep, families moved farther and farther apart to find enough grazing land. Home was a *hogan*, a cone-shaped house built of timbers and poles and covered with bark and earth. The hogan entrance faced east to the sunrise.

Navajo extended families were grouped into about 60 clans. Daughters inherited the hogans, sheep, and other property of their mothers. Ancestry was determined through the female line. Husbands fathered the children but were responsible to their sisters and their sisters' offspring. Many Navajo families today live in hogans and live by centuries-old traditions.

In 1863, U.S. Army forces under Col. Christopher "Kit" Carson campaigned against the Navajo, destroying their fields and crops and killing their livestock. The Army forced 8,500 Navajo men, women, and children to walk to a barren reservation in eastern New Mexico. Many died during the journey known in Navajo history as the Long Walk. The survivors were allowed to return to their homeland in 1868. There they began the process of rebuilding.

Today the Navajo are the largest American Indian tribe in the United States. The reservation lands in New Mexico, Arizona, and Utah total more than 15 million acres.

## Desert Farmers

The O'odham and Tohono O'odham of southern Arizona, though closely related, developed different ways of coping with the demands of desert life. The O'odham lived along rivers and built large, permanent villages where they tended plentiful crops of squash, corn, beans, and cotton. Water for the crops flowed from the Salt and Gila Rivers through a series of irrigation ditches.

The Tohono O'odham, living deep in the desert, depended on rain to water their crops. They spent the summers in their "field villages" in the desert, where heavy rains usually supplied enough water to grow beans and corn. In winter, the Tohono O'odham moved to their "well villages," near springs in the mountains, and hunted deer and peccary for food. In times of famine, Tohono O'odham families sometimes moved to O'odham villages and worked in the fields.

O'odham men were farmers, hunters, fishermen, and builders. They built the houses—small, round, flat-topped, pole-framed dwellings—and the *ramadas*, which were open-air structures that served as the community's clubhouses. Men wove cotton fibers into sheets of fabric on their horizontal looms. Women sewed the cotton sheeting and other materials into clothes.

O'odham women foraged for mesquite seeds and the fruit of the saguaro cactus to add variety to their diet. Wild foods were even more important to their kinsfolk, the Tohono O'odham, who depended on foraging for wild plants to round out their crops. They cooked and ate the fleshy heart of the mescal plant. The beanlike mesquite seed was a regular part of their diet, and the fruit of the saguaro cactus was a delicacy. This sweet, fleshy fruit was eaten fresh or dried; boiled into jam or syrup; or dried and ground into a powder that made a sweet drink when added to water.

Both tribes were known for the fine baskets they created. The Tohono O'odham are also renowned for the calendar stick they developed. With it, they could recount their history over many years and record important events in tribal life.



An O'odham carrying-basket

In the 1960s the Papago officially changed their name from Papago, which means "Bean Eaters," to Tohono O'odham, which means "Desert People" in their native language. The name change reflects the tribe's desire to keep its identity and traditions. Similarly, the group formerly known as the Pima now prefer the name O'odham (People) or Akimel O'odham (River People).

### Piman Villages

An O'odham tribal chief was elected to preside over the chiefs of the villages. Village chiefs reported to the tribal chief in council. They were responsible for communal farm projects and for defending against marauding Apache raiders. The Tohono O'odham also had village chiefs, but there was no chief for the tribe as a whole. In every Piman village, one man, the Keeper of the Smoke, was a ceremonial chief.

Villages of both tribes were organized into two clans. The clans opposed each other in games and gambling, the major entertainment in the villages.

Unlike many other tribes, the Pimans (as the O'odham and Tohono O'odham together are known) allowed two members of the same clan to marry. Children took clan membership from their fathers.

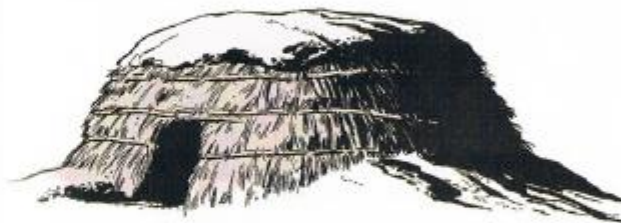
The Pimans believed that songs and singing had magical powers. They had corn-planting ceremonies, ceremonies for "singing up the corn," and ceremonies at harvest time. Medicine men and singers conducted curing rituals. Rain-bringing ceremonies and baby-naming ceremonies were important religious rituals.

Pimans believed they gained power through visions. Animal spirits, they thought, gave men power for curing, warring, even gambling and running. On the rare occasions when they made war (usually in defense against the Apache), villagers danced for 16 nights to help the warriors' purification rituals.

The Tohono O'odham made annual pilgrimages across the desert to a place near the Gulf of California where they believed the rain spirits lived. There, on the salt flats, they drank saguaro wine and prayed to the rain spirits for valuable water.

The O'odham still live along the Gila and Salt Rivers. The Tohono O'odham reservation stretches for more than 100 miles along the Mexico/Arizona border and extends far into southern Arizona. The reservation lies in the Sonoran Desert, where the Tohono O'odham have lived for thousands of years. It is a land of wide valleys, plains, and jutting mountain ranges that rise to nearly 8,000 feet. One of the peaks, Baboquivari Peak, 7,730 feet high, is the sacred mountain home of the Tohono O'odham creator god, I'itoi.

The reservation consists of four separate lands: Tohono O'odham, Gila Bend, San Xavier, and Florence Village. The combined reservation covers nearly three million acres, about the size of the state of Connecticut. Most contemporary Tohono O'odham live on their lands in permanent villages or they live in the cities surrounding the reservation.



Piman Indians built earth-and-pole houses over shallow pits.



## Great Basin and Plateau

### Great Basin Tribes

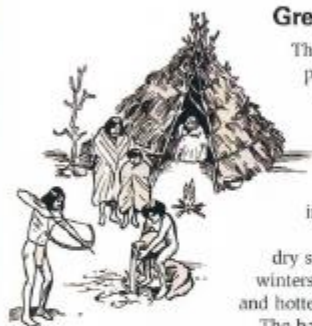
The Great Basin cultural area takes in nearly all of present-day Utah and Nevada; parts of Colorado, Wyoming, Idaho, Oregon, and California; and small sections of Arizona, New Mexico, and Montana. Much of the Great Basin is desert.

The area is covered with grasses and sagebrush. At higher elevations, forests of pine grow in the mountains and near lakes and streams.

The climate in the Great Basin varies from hot dry summers at lower elevations to extremely cold winters at higher elevations. Death Valley, the lowest and hottest point in the Americas, is in the Great Basin.

The basin is surrounded on all sides by mountain ranges. The Rocky Mountains stand on the eastern border; the Sierra Nevadas on the west. The Colorado Plateau forms the southern border; the Columbia Plateau the northern.

Because the mountains block rain and snow blowing in from the ocean, rainfall in the Great Basin is low and the evaporation rate is high. A few streams flow through the valleys, fed by runoff from the mountains. In ancient times the basin had many large lakes, but most of them have evaporated. The Great Salt Lake, together with Utah Lake and Sevier Lake, are all that remain of an enormous, ancient body of water called Lake Bonneville.



A Paiute youth floods a burrow with water as a hunter stands ready to shoot the animal when it comes out.

For 10,000 years, tribes of resourceful desert dwellers have met the challenges of life in the Great Basin.

**Great Basin tribes:** Paiute (Northern and Southern), Bannock, Mono, Western Shoshone, Lehmi, Ute, Chemehuevi, Washo

### Lifeways

Because of the limited vegetation in the Great Basin, Indians in this area were traditionally hunter-gatherers. The main food source for early native peoples was pine nuts. The people also varied their diet with acorns, wild beans, the bulb of the camas plant, mesquite, ricegrass, wheatgrass, and berries from various shrubs. A few farming groups raised corn, beans, and squash. The people fished for trout, salmon, and whitefish, and hunted game such as pronghorn, rabbits, rodents, snakes, lizards, and birds.



A Paiute encampment on a desert plateau in northern Arizona. The shelters were made of brush placed over a frame of willow poles.

Indians of the Great Basin traveled in small family groups seeking food. At special times during the year, the family groups would work together for antelope, rabbit, and grasshopper drives.

In spring, the people gathered cattails from the marshes and ate the crisp inside flesh. They trapped ground squirrels and, with bow and arrow, shot Canada geese and other waterfowl. They used finely crafted decoys to lure and trap ducks in nets, and they gathered duck eggs. They fished the streams that filled each spring from mountain runoff.

In summer, they might eat the abundant insect life: locusts, caterpillars, and crickets raw or roasted. Ants were roasted and ground with seeds to make a flour. Grasshoppers were scorched and ground up to make a porridge. Robins and flickers went into the cookpot, but not magpies, which were prized especially for their feathers.

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Water was precious and scarce, and the people of the Great Basin spent much time searching for it. Wood from the relatively few trees was also highly prized, for fires as well as tool making.

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In autumn, it was important to gather and dry enough food to help tide them over during the winter months. The small bands went into the hills in the fall to meet with other small groups and gather piñon nuts. Then they returned to the desert floor to repeat the yearly cycle.

The type of shelter they used depended upon the season. In winter, they lived in wickiups—small, cone-shaped structures with a pole framework covered in sod, bark, grass, animal skins, brush, or reeds. During the summer months, a lean-to or windbreak made of brush provided living quarters.



A Paiute twined basketwork cap with a painted design

#### Family Life and Customs

A Basin Indian encampment did not need a chief, although they might sometimes consult a wise elder. Nor did they need many rules or laws, for the small group consisted only of an extended family.

Indians of the Great Basin were spiritual people. They believed they shared their world with good spirits. Shamans were greatly respected; they were thought to have the power to heal the sick and injured. The people often performed round dances in which the participants would join arms and dance around a central pole or tree. These dances were done to ask the spirits for rain, for a successful hunt, and for other reasons.

Prayers were offered at the beginning of the fall piñon nut harvest. The ritual piñon prayer dance lasted through the night after the first day's harvest. Nuts were scattered on the ground to show gratitude for Earth's bounty.

When potential mates were scarce, both men and women might take more than one mate. Desert women were valued for the foraging and gathering that made them the major food providers. Women as well as men could become shamans.

#### Clothing and Crafts

The Basin tribes, particularly the Paiute, were noted for their craftwork. They produced cedar-bark ornaments, tule rush mats, nets, baskets for storage, basketwork caps, and watertight baskets that could be used as cooking pots. The women used chokeberry wood, pliable twigs, and antelope hide to make cradleboards for babies.

Jackrabbits were prized both for food and for their pelts, which were sewn together to make a blanket or cloak for winter wear. As many as a hundred skins might be needed to make one man's wrap. Deer provided not only food but also skins for clothing. Most of the Basin Indians wore clothes and occasionally sandals woven from shredded sagebrush and cedar bark.



When the Paiute could get deer, they made the skins into clothing like this dress. Many Basin Indians made clothes and sandals from shredded bark.

The Paiute entrusted their myths and legends to a Teller of Tales. The Teller entertained around the evening campfire with stories of talking animals and the adventures of Coyote, an animal the Basin tribes held in high regard.

#### Basin History

Basin people made war only in self-defense. When nonnatives came, the newcomers were defeated at first by the elements, not the Indians. Death Valley claimed many. Forty-five people in the Donner party died of starvation while crossing the Sierra Nevada to reach the West Coast.

When prospectors began pouring into the area in their search for silver and gold, they ruined the land for food gathering. They cut down stands of piñon trees for firewood. Livestock trampled wild seed plots. To survive, many Indians had no choice but to work in the white men's mining camps and on their ranches.

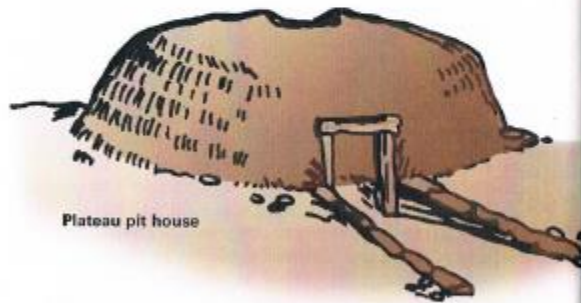
Some Indians adopted the white man's ways. Others fought. The Northern Shoshone took to horses and rode the plains with other tribes.

Many Indians of the Great Basin today make their living as farmers and ranchers. For additional income, some tribes in the region lease mining rights to their lands.

### Indians of the Plateau

Plateau Indians settled in the northwestern United States, where the basin lowlands rise and become the highlands of present-day Idaho, Oregon, Washington, Montana, and part of Wyoming. The Rocky Mountains border the region on the east. To the west is the Cascade Range. The Columbia, Snake, and Fraser Rivers and their tributaries provided the Plateau Indians with waterways to travel for trade and abundant salmon for food.

Here are the major Plateau tribes: Klamath, Cayuse, Flathead, Nez Perce, Yakima, Klikitat, Walla Walla, Umatilla



Plateau pit house

Before the coming of the horse, the Plateau Indians were gatherers, hunters, and fishers. Sometime toward the end of the Ice Age, they were drawn to the majestic Columbia River by promising fishing sites. Cascade points—leaf-shaped projectiles—are artifacts that mark the passage of these Paleo-Indians.

With nets and spears, they took salmon from the Columbia and Snake Rivers. Women gathered berries and wild vegetables; the starchy edible bulb of the camas, a kind of lily, was second only to salmon as a main staple in their diet.

### Lifeways

Plateau Indians traveled the rugged high country in search of food and moved with the changing seasons. They traveled in larger bands than the Basin Indians, mainly because food was more abundant and more people could be fed from available game and fish.

Most Plateau peoples had summer lodges made of bullrush mats over cottonwood frames. In winter they lived in partly underground earth houses.

Whole villages camped beside the rivers when and where the salmon ran. After the women had finished smoking and preserving the catch, they took apart their wooden drying racks and moved on. Although they relied on fish as their main source of food, the Plateau peoples also hunted deer, elk, mountain sheep, and rabbits.

The villages were independent. Their headmen were not all-powerful. They guided councils in deciding such matters as when to break camp and return to the winter home.



Plateau tribes were renowned for their basketmaking.

Using dugout canoes, Plateau tribes traveled and traded widely along the Columbia and Fraser river systems. From the west came sea otter pelts and ornamental shells. Deerskins, hemp for basketmaking, and bitterroot were brought from the interior. All sorts of goods changed hands: dried salmon, candlefish oil, baskets, carvings, even the canoes in which the traders carried their wares. When horses came to the Plateau in the early 18th century, tribes like the Yakima, Nez Perce, and Cayuse became expert horse raisers and traders.

The Plateau Indians had a complex system of beliefs and ceremonies. Everyone sought visits from guardian spirits, and when someone felt his guardian spirit coming to heal him, there was a ceremony of singing and dancing. Shamans had visions and appeared to the people in the guise of grizzly bears.

#### Clothing, Arts, and Crafts



When traveling over snow, men wore circular snowshoes like this.

Exquisite baskets with bright geometric designs, which could be used for food gathering and even cooking, were a trademark of these tribes. The women wore basketwork hats woven from plant fibers. They sewed deerskins into leggings and shirts and made dresses decorated with beads and fringe.

The Wishram and neighboring tribes were noted for their horn carvings. Using the horns of bighorn and mountain sheep, they carved delicate and complex designs into bowls, spoons, and other utensils.

The Wasco and Wishram tribes of Oregon developed an unusual "X-ray" style for wood carvings and basketry designs. The skeletons of the artists' subjects could be seen in designs portraying animals and humans, as though the artists had looked through the flesh.

#### Plateau History

When the horse reached the Plateau Indians in the 1700s, it changed the lifeways of tribes such as the Flatheads. They adopted the buffalo-hunting and tepee culture of the Plains Indians and fought with the Blackfoot for hunting lands.

In 1805, the explorers Lewis and Clark arrived, guided by their interpreter, the Shoshone woman Sacajawea. The explorers were followed by fur trappers and traders. Traditional Plateau lifeways were again altered as hunting for food gave way to hunting for the fur business.

In the wake of the fur trappers came the settlers. The flood of settlers disordered the Plateau Indians' way of life. Some tribes, including the Yakima and Nez Perce, tried to resist, but the odds against them were overwhelming. Today, the reservations of Plateau tribes dot the maps of Idaho, Oregon, Washington, and Montana.



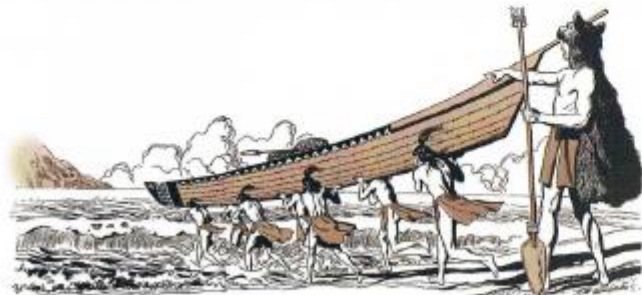
Jason, a Nez Perce chief, in buckskin clothing. The Nez Perce are Plateau Indians. (Courtesy Smithsonian Institution)

## California

Many California Indians made their homes in a land of plenty, between the mountains of the Cascade Range and Sierra Nevada to the east and the Pacific Ocean on their western shore. The climate was mild, the rain generous, and food and plant life abundant. A wide assortment of raw materials was available to fashion shelter, weapons, tools, clothing, and other necessities.

Such abundance supported many people. Perhaps 133,000 Indians speaking more than a hundred different languages and regional dialects lived in the area at the time nonnatives came.

California Indians differed from one another not only in language but also in physical appearance. An interesting fact about this group is that the Mohaves of southeastern California, among the tallest people on the continent, shared the same cultural area as the Yukis of the northern coast, who were among the shortest people.



Californians such as the Chumash had coastal territory and were skilled seamen.

The presence of so many different languages and varied physical traits is evidence that many different groups migrated to the area in prehistoric times. Overall, however, they were more alike than different. They ate the same kinds of foods, which they gathered and prepared in much the same ways. Their social organizations and lifestyles were similar, as were their religious beliefs.

The following are some of the better-known tribes of California.

**Northern Californians:** Karok or Karuk, Yurok, Wiyot, Shasta, Hupa, Yuki

**Central Californians:** Maidu, Pomo, Costanoan, Miwok, Yokut

**Southern Californians:** Chumash, Serrano, Luiseño, Cahuilla, Gabrielino

**Yuman tribes:** Yuma, Mohave, Cocopa

### Food

Many tribes depended on the fruit of the oak tree—the acorn—as a staple food. During the important fall harvest, women gathered the nuts as the men and boys shook them out of the trees. Then the acorns were hulled and ground into a meal that was leached with hot water to remove the bitter taste. Boiled, the mush was a main dish at each of the day's two meals. Acorn meal could also be baked into bread.

A few tribes, like the Yuma and Mohave, were farmers. Although they lived in a sun-baked desert, they could grow corn, beans, pumpkins, and melons, and later wheat, along the fertile banks of the lower Colorado River. They also hunted small desert game, fished, and gathered mesquite beans and piñon nuts.

Most California Indians did not farm. They were hunter-gatherers. The land teemed with wildlife; most groups hunted deer, rabbits, and gamebirds. More than 60 wild plants were gathered for food. Fish and shellfish were abundant in the rivers and along the coast. The Chumash fished the ocean in plank canoes to add to their staple diet of acorns and small game.



A Pomo woman pours hot water on raw acorn meal to remove the bitter taste. Pouring through a bundle of bullrush twigs would make the water flow evenly over the meal.

## Dwellings

California tribes lived in many different types of houses. A typical house was cone-shaped like a tepee and built of poles covered with brush, grass, or reeds.

Some groups had lean-tos made of redwood bark slabs. In summer, the desert-dwelling Yumans lived in open-sided, flat-roofed shelters that gave protection from the sun.

Some tribes in central California built big, solid homes—dome-shaped structures that housed as many as 40 to 50 people. The Maidu built partly underground houses 20 to 40 feet in diameter. A single hole in the roof through which people entered the house also allowed smoke to escape.

In the northern part of the area, tribes built wood plank houses.

The Mohave, though farmers, loved to travel. They traveled to trade, but sometimes they would journey hundreds of miles simply out of curiosity about other groups.



The tepee-shaped dwellings of the Miwoks had a framework of poles tied with vines, then were covered with brush, grass, or reeds.



Pomo Indians haul in a net full of fish. Nets were made of hemp, milkweed, or nettles. (Courtesy Milwaukee Public Museum)

## Village and Family Life

Villages typically were made up of several families, related through the male line, who lived in small, independent groups. Sometimes, when two or three of these villages were close to one another, the people formed a loose, unstructured association.

A headman might guide village affairs or preside at meetings. The shaman was the dominant person in the village, and in some areas was more likely to be a woman than a man.

The single family was the basic social and economic unit of many of these tribes. Life was relatively easy, but everyone had chores to do. The women gathered and cooked the food, made baskets, raised the babies, and kept the household in order. Babies were welcomed, and parents were seldom strict with their children. Men were responsible for hunting, fishing, fighting, building their houses, making tools, and ceremonial dancing. Generally, young men married young women from outside bands, who were chosen by the parents.

In the Pomo groups, a marriage might be arranged by maternal aunts, but according to the couple's wishes. The young man suggested his choice of bride; she had the right to accept or refuse. Gifts were exchanged as a matter of goodwill between families.

Some groups were villagers in winter, travelers in summer. Most put down permanent roots. Chumash villages could be quite large, with more than a thousand inhabitants.

## Ishi of the Yahi

In August 1911, in Croville, California, the townsfolk found a nearly naked and starving Indian. He was exhausted and terrified and could not speak a word of English. The sheriff put him in jail for safekeeping.

Ishi (the name meant "man" in his native language) had lived with his tribe, the Yahi, in the foothills of Mount Lassen in northern California. By the time he wandered into the small town, he was alone.

The story of Ishi made the newspapers. Two anthropologists (scientists who study human cultures) from the University of California quickly arranged to take charge of Ishi. He was taken to San Francisco and given a comfortable place to live in a museum.

Imagine this middle-aged man (Ishi was about 54 when he was found) who had never been around whites or large groups. The sights and sounds of 20th-century civilization must have assaulted every sense. He was shy and bashful and lonely.

The anthropologists spent many hours with Ishi, learning his language and his beliefs. They took him camping in his former wilderness home so they could see how he had once lived. He made a salmon harpoon, snared deer, and shaped juniper wood for a bow.

Ishi was a gentle man. He learned some English, adopted non-Indian ways, and overcame his fear of crowds and noise. For the last five years of his life, he lived in San Francisco at the museum. He demonstrated native crafts to museum visitors and traveled around the city when he was not working.

### Religion and Ritual

California Indians had a variety of religious beliefs and practices. Some tribes had shamans, including women healers. Some tribes had secret societies. Prayers were offered to supernatural spirits who were thought to live in mountains, trees, caves, and other abodes in the local environment.

Initiation rites—the passage from childhood to adulthood—were important in most of the tribes, as were death rites. Death ceremonies were meant to free the spirit of the dead and keep it from coming back as a ghost.

Major ceremonies for the Yurok of northwestern California included the White Deerskin Dance and the Jumping Dance. Each ritual lasted for days. The purpose was to renew the world for the coming year and ward off illness and misfortune.

Ceremonies also were held for curing the sick and influencing the weather. The Patwin Indians of California's Sacramento Valley held sacred ceremonies from October to May to bring health and prosperity, rainfall, and a plentiful harvest of wild crops. A secret society, the Kuksu, was in charge of the rituals. Kuksu members used disguises of feather and grass headdresses to hide their identities and make them resemble the spirits they portrayed. Some headdresses covered not only the face but the body as well.

Music and dancing played important roles in ceremonies. Some groups used a potion made from parts of a poisonous weed to induce visions.

### Clothing, Arts, and Crafts

Because of the warm climate, little clothing was needed. Males rarely wore clothes except in the winter. Women dressed in two-piece garments of a skirt and apron made of animal skin or shredded willow bark. They sometimes wore basketwork hats, iris fiber hairnets, feather headbands, or feather crowns. Some went barefoot, while others wore high leather moccasins or sandals made of fiber. In cold weather, they wore robes of sea-otter fur, rabbit skin, or feathers.

For decoration they wore handsome necklaces of shell and stone, earrings, and armbands. Tattooing was popular among tribes from the Hupa of the north to the Mohave of the south. Men and women also painted themselves for greater beauty.

California Indians—famous for their basketry—fashioned reeds, grasses, roots, and barks into all kinds of articles: trays, containers, cook pots, hats, fish traps, baby carriers, ceremonial objects, and even boats. The Pomo decorated their finely crafted baskets with shells and feathers. Basketry was the work of women in most tribes, but Pomo men often wove articles such as mats and fish traps.

Various groups made ceremonial objects like stone and clay pipes; rattles of gourds, turtle shells, and deer hooves; and drums, flutes, and whistles. In central California, coastal tribes hollowed bowls out of soapstone. Other tribes made bowls and jars from clay, using coiled ropes of the material. Northern tribes carved spoons and purses from elk antlers.



A young man of a Yuman tribe in typical clothing (Courtesy Smithsonian Institution)



Southern Californians might wear yucca-fiber sandals, with soles almost 1 inch thick.



Diegueño eagle feather dance skirt



Pomo twined burden basket



Woman's carrying-basket and net that fitted across her forehead

Men made weapons and tools for the hunt: nets of hemp or milkweed, harpoons, stone knives, and willow and ash bows armed with feather-tipped arrows. The seagoing Chumash built canoes of pine planks sewn with fiber cords and caulked with tar. Their fishing nets were woven of sea grass and weighted with stone balls. The Hupa of northwestern California made dugout canoes from redwood logs split in half.

### Warfare

Warfare was not commonplace among native Californians. Disputes arising from feuds or vengeful acts were usually settled by negotiation or bargaining.

The Mohave (also spelled Mojave) who lived and farmed along the lower Colorado River had a warrior class known as the *kwanamis* ("brave men"). The *kwanamis* dreamed of battle and often went out in raiding parties of 10 or 12 fighters. Warfare on a larger scale was less frequent. With their River Yuman allies, the Mohave made forays against the Maricopa to the east. The Yuma called upon the Mohave to join them in expeditions against the Cocopa who lived southward.

Native Californians fiercely resisted the onslaught of Europeans, but the non-Indian newcomers were relentless. In southern California beginning in 1769, the Spanish gathered Indians into missions, where they hoped to use their labor and to teach them Christianity and European-style trades. By the time Mexico lost California to the United States, whole bands of Mission Indians had been stripped of their traditional ways.

Entire tribes lost their cultures and ways of life. Some disappeared, but others endured. Today, California has dozens of Indian communities throughout the state, from bands of Mission Indians in the south to the northern Yurok reservation.

When nonnatives began pouring into California during the great Gold Rush of 1848, the Indians were overrun. Many wandered, homeless, for years. Some blended with the settlers; others, like the Yuma and Mohave, took up farming on a large reservation.

## How the Sky Spirit Made Mount Shasta

Before there were people on Earth, the Chief of the Sky Spirits grew tired of his home in the Above World, because the air was always icy cold. So he carved a hole in the sky and pushed all the snow and ice down below until he made a great mound that reached from Earth almost to the sky. Today that great mound is known as Mount Shasta.

The Sky Spirit took his walking stick and walked down the mountain. When he was about halfway to the valley below, he began to put his finger to the ground here and there, here and there. Wherever his finger touched, a tree grew. The snow melted in his footsteps, and the water ran down in rivers.

The Sky Spirit broke the small end of his walking stick into pieces and threw the pieces into the rivers. Some of the pieces turned into beaver and otter; some became fish. When the leaves fell from the trees, he picked them up, blew upon them, and made the birds. Then he took the big end of his stick and made all the animals that walk on Earth.

Pleased with all that he had done, the Chief of the Sky Spirits brought his family down to live on Earth with him. The mountain became their lodge. He made a big fire in the center of Mount Shasta, and he made a hole in the top so the smoke and sparks could fly out. When he put a big log on the fire, sparks would fly up and Earth would tremble.

The Sky Spirit's giant strides, when he came down the mountainside, tore up the land under his feet. Even today his tracks can be seen in the rocky path on the south side of Mount Shasta.

Some say the Sky Spirit decided to go back up into the sky to live. When he left Earth, he banked the fire in the center of his lodge, the mountain. That is why Mount Shasta is a dormant volcano today.

—Condensed from a traditional Modoc story

Before battle, Yuman warriors marched in formation to the battleground and issued ceremonial challenges to the foe. Leaders of each war party fought duels, often ending the battle with no one else fighting.



## Pacific Northwest



The bounty of the sea was the harvest of the Northwest Coast tribes. They were seagoing people. They built the most seaworthy craft found anywhere in early America and canoed the Pacific Ocean, its inlets and bays, and the region's rivers and mountain streams.

These tribes fished and lived along the Pacific Coast from southeastern Alaska to northern California. They lived on islands, on beaches, and in sheltered coves along the coast.

In the south, rising abruptly from the beaches, were thick forest-covered mountains that gave the Indians the raw materials for their canoes, houses, and totem poles. In the north were more rugged, rocky mountains, sheer cliffs, and huge canyons.



Northwest Coast tribes caught salmon and candlefish in weirs (fences) set in rivers. The salmon were smoked, and the candlefish cooked for their oil. (Courtesy Milwaukee Public Museum)

### The People

On the coastal islands of present-day British Columbia and Alaska lived the wealthy Maritime peoples: the whalers, the seafarers, the totem-pole builders. Their relatives, the River and Bay peoples, lived slightly inland along the rivers and ocean inlets from the Canadian border to northern California.

#### Maritime peoples: (Alaska and British Columbia)

Tlingit, Haida, Tsimshian, Kwakiutl (Kwakwaka'wakw), Bella Coola, Nuuchahnulth

**River and Bay tribes:** (Washington Coast) Quinault, Quilleute, Chehalis, Makah; (Washington Puget Sound) Coast Salish, Chimakum, Lummi, Klallam; (Oregon) Chinook, Tillamook, Alsea

### Food

Northwest Coast Indians fished for salmon, smelt, halibut, trout, cod, and herring. Women cleaned and dried the fish and collected mussels, clams, and small abalones.

Men fished with carved hardwood hooks. They trapped fish in large basket-like traps set in the rivers where the salmon ran. With dip nets, the Chinook and others scooped up salmon as the teeming masses of fish fought their way upstream to spawn. Pulling big nets behind their canoes, southern tribes caught barrels of fish, while northern tribes harpooned salmon.

The Nuuchahnulth and Makah were whale hunters. They went to sea in canoes, led by chief harpooners skilled in finding and spearing the huge marine mammals.

Indians here gathered food, too—berries, roots, and wild celery. Inland, the Tlingit hunted caribou; others caught elk, deer, and black bear in pitfall traps. The Kwakiutl and Nuuchahnulth snared diving ducks in underwater traps. The coastal Salish knocked ducks out of midair by stretching huge nets across flyways between ponds and lakes. In the north, hunters climbed the sheer cliffs after mountain goats, driving them down to snares and waiting spears. Most of the tribes hunted sea lions, seals, sea otters, and porpoises. None of the tribes were farmers.

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The Haida were also great hunters of whales and sea otters. Canoes were to them what horses were to the Plains Indians.

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To build a plank house, the parts were grooved and fitted together to support one another.

## Dwellings

Without nails or saws, Northwest Coast Indians built imposing wooden houses. The walls and roofs were made of wood planks that were precisely fitted and tied to a framework of thick beams, poles, posts, and plates. All the homes of this region were built for multifamily use. An average lodge was about 30 by 45 feet.

In the north, the Tlingit, Haida, and Tsimshian built rectangular gable-roofed houses, often larger than houses today. There is evidence that some homes were as long as a thousand feet, built to house an entire village. The Kwakiutl, Bella Coola, and Nuuchahnulth lived in low, sloping, almost flat-roofed houses. Some tribes built houses on pilings, often over the water. The coastal Salish, the Makah, and others lived in plank houses with roofs that sloped from front to back.

## Village and Family Life

Social standing meant much in the family and village life of this region. Improving one's rank in society was a major goal. To do this, one needed to accumulate riches like blankets, dried fish, shells, baskets, furs, hides, and canoes.

Canoe making, wood carving, carpentry, and whale-hunting skills, passed down in families, were handled by specialists. Everyday chores were handled by slaves. A boy became a specialist by having a vision about a skill, then training in that skill for several years. The boy without a vision usually became a routine fisherman.

Not all of the groups had clans. Clan loyalty, however, was the basis of the Tlingit social order. Tlingit children belonged to their mother's clan. They were expected to learn their clan history by heart, as mothers and grandmothers repeated the stories time and again.

Each village was headed by its wealthiest family. The highest-ranking individual (usually, but not always, a man) was leader of the village. The leader's high-ranking relatives were one rung down on the social scale. Less affluent relations were further down the ladder. The middle classes were free people with some property. Below them were the slaves, who were people captured from the poorer and weaker tribes inland and south along the California coast.

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Marriages usually were arranged by the young people's families. The families exchanged gifts—as many and as valuable as they could afford—to show off their wealth.

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About three times during his lifetime, a wealthy chief of a village would throw a huge party, called a *potlatch*. This was a tremendous feast, sometimes lasting for days, with much singing, dancing, and games, and displays of wealth. The host called his guests up in the order of their social rank and gave them gifts. For the highest-ranking guests, gifts were especially lavish—a canoe, perhaps, or a robe of ermine. Such fine gifts might have taken the chief years of hunting, fishing, trading, and wealth-building to get. The guests performed the traditional songs and dances of their clan as well as new ones prepared for the occasion.

The Tlingit and Tsimshian held potlatches to honor a dead chief and to appoint a new one. The Haida, Kwakiutl, Bella Coola, and Nuuchahnulth gave potlatches to honor the younger person who would someday inherit an important position in the family. Chiefs in the Salish groups, and in some Chinook villages, gave potlatches to maintain their social positions. In the far north, if a chief or his heir did something embarrassing or undignified in public, he threw a small face-saving potlatch.

## Religion and Ritual

Many groups, especially those from the southern part of the coast, celebrated the beginning of the salmon run in late spring with a ritual of thanksgiving. The people believed that salmon were a race of immortals who lived in houses beneath the sea. The immortals swam up the rivers in springtime to offer themselves to humans for food. The ritual gave thanks for the gift of the salmon, to encourage the immortals to return the next year.

Supernatural beings of the Tlingit world included the Thunderbird, which was thought to flap its wings and create thunder, lightning, and rain. Land Otter Man was believed to kidnap people and rob them of their senses. Raven was respected for cleverness; many Tlingit stories tell of Raven's skill at outwitting others.

Among the Kwakiutl, only wealthy men and women could generally afford to pay the fees to belong to the religious societies. One society was dedicated to the spirit of the wolf, another to the spirits of the sky, such as stars and birds. The Shaman's Society was for shamans only.

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The Tlingit believed that, after death, their ancestors were reborn as babies. When a clan member died, the mourners dressed the deceased for travel, provided food for the trip to the spirit world, and cremated the body.

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A wooden Nuuchahnulth headdress-mask representing a supernatural wolf



Klallam Indians wore raincoats like this, made of woven bark.



A Kwakiutl hat with painted design

All Tlingit men sought guardian spirits. Some had visions in which their guardians seemed to reveal themselves. Shamans were believed to associate with the spirits and to cure illness by supernatural means. Both men and women could be shamans; most inherited their roles.

Groups such as the Kwakiutl and Bella Coola had a rich ceremonial life centered on secret societies. Society members wore fantastic, elaborately carved and painted masks that represented spirits or creatures from the tribes' mythologies. During ceremonies, the wearers told stories that gave the meanings behind their masks. Some masks were quite complicated, with moving or interchangeable parts.

Ceremonies were held in the fall and winter, after the people had moved from their summer fishing camps back to their permanent villages. The rituals had two purposes: to initiate new members, and to impress audiences with the power of the spirits. Society members appeared in spectacular costumes, masks, and headdresses representing spirits. They staged dramatic productions, like plays performed in theaters. Tricks were used to give the illusion of magical powers. Dancers "disappeared" through trapdoors and tunnels and in puffs of smoke. Carved birds "flew" overhead on strings. From unseen performers, strange voices called out. The effect was truly magical, and reinforced the people's awe of the supernatural world.

### Clothing, Arts, and Crafts

In the summer, the men of most tribes wore nothing. If they covered themselves, as the Tlingit usually did, it was with a breechcloth. They went barefoot, or wore moccasins for mountain travel. During the frequent downpours on the rainy coast, most wore raincoats and capes made of shredded cedar bark, and wide-brimmed basketwork rain hats.

Women's clothing typically was of shredded, woven cedar bark. If you travel the mountainous Northwest today, you may hear of the multicolored Chilkat blankets and shirts made by Tlingit women from mountain goat wool. Chilkat garments were among the most treasured items a Tlingit owned. Salish groups also used goat's wool in their clothing, as well as hair from a special breed of small white dog.



Tlingit dance cape, made of leather

The northernmost tribes had brightly painted dance aprons and half-leggings. They made headdresses with a forehead mask of wood and with ermine skins sewn to buckskin hanging down the back.

Using chisels made of stone, elkhorn, and shell, people of the Northwest Coast became master wood-carvers. How these artisans turned wood and horn into extraordinary masks and elegant dishes, spoons, fishhooks, storage boxes, and other items amazed the first explorers to visit this land.

Steaming and bending wood, sewing pieces together with spruce root, and pegging (driving pegs into predrilled holes) were techniques perfected by the coastal peoples. The polished products of these carvers were sanded smooth, first with sandstone, then with sharkskin. Men sanded their wooden whaling canoes so smooth that they could slip noiselessly through the water and surprise resting whales.

The canoes they made were the grandest in pre-Columbian America. Some were more than 50 feet long and 8 feet wide. Most were dugouts, carved from a single log of cedar or redwood.



Haida chief's ceremonial hat with killer whale and bear faces

Most Northwest Indians wore tattoos. They painted their faces, too, for practical as well as decorative purposes. The paint helped protect against sun, wind, and cold.



The beaver was a popular symbol on Haida totem poles.

Northwest Coast tribes are known for their totem poles. Some were 60 feet tall. Wealthy families hired master craftsmen to carve the poles. Fashioned from cedar tree trunks, some totems were memorial poles put up by the heir of a dead chief to show that he was assuming the chief's title and jobs. Some were mortuary poles and held the ashes of the dead. Another type was the house-portal pole. A post carved with symbols representing the family's history and social

rank, it was built onto the front of the house. Still other poles symbolized special privileges.

The carvings on totem poles usually represented important events or times in the owner's life, illustrated stories and myths, or showed family (clan) connections. Totem poles had nothing to do with religion and were never worshipped, as many 19th-century missionaries mistakenly believed.

None of the Northwest Coast peoples made pottery. For storage and cooking they used wooden boxes and woven baskets. They wove reeds and the inner bark of the red cedar into mats, pillows, baskets, tablecloths, and even sails. Many articles, including arrowheads, were made from the horns of elk and mountain goat.



A Nuuchahnulth whaling harpoon head

## Warfare

The Tlingit, Bella Coola, Chinook, and some Tsimshian groups made sinew-backed hardwood bows. North of Vancouver Island, tribes used slings and double-bladed daggers; southward they had heavy whale-rib war clubs. Some tribes used "slave killers"—short-handled picks made of antlers, bone, stone, and hard wood. The Kwakiutl fought with bone swords.

Tlingit, Haida, and Tsimshian war leaders and chiefs wore wooden helmets, elkhide armor, and breastplates of wooden slats. The warriors themselves wore no special garments for protection, relying instead on speed and agility. To make sure enemies could not catch hold of their long hair, normally worn loose, they knotted it on top of their heads.

Despite all their weapons and armor, these tribes did more feuding than actual warring. South of Puget Sound, so-called wars were little more than quarrels between villages. Only the more northern groups fought real wars, usually to take property.

The Haida and Tlingit raided to get slaves or wealth. Others staged raids after a chief died, killing only the first persons they met so that others could mourn, too, or could "depart" with and be company for the dead chief. The Maritime peoples brought back heads to put on poles outside their villages. Only the Tlingit took scalps.

## A (Nearly) Lost Culture

The highly developed Northwest Coast culture declined quickly once nonnatives arrived. In 1792, George Vancouver, a British explorer, and Robert Gray, an American sea captain, started fur trading in the region. In return for furs, the Indians got new tools and materials. Harpoons, bows, and clubs gave way to guns and iron traps. Boiling water by dropping fire-heated stones into a cookpot became obsolete when brass kettles appeared.

By about 1840, the Hudson's Bay Company was buying all the furs it could, and many Indians began wearing woolen "trade blankets" they received in exchange. Since Hudson's Bay Company bought only furs, many fishermen turned to hunting, and in a short time fur-bearing animals became scarce.



Tlingit wooden  
boat paddles

Encouraged by the villagers' newfound wealth through trading, potlaches became ruinously extravagant and frequent. The rank system began to fall apart. Imported diseases including measles and scarlet fever killed thousands.

In 1842, covered wagons reached the Willamette Valley in Oregon. Indians soon lost their lands and were put on reservations. Some tribes fought hopeless wars resisting the move, but eventually they were relocated. Other Indians blended into the non-Indian culture. By the early 1900s, traditional ways were disappearing.

But the Northwest Coast culture did not vanish. By the 1930s, the Coast Indian population had begun to grow. In 1951, laws banning major native ceremonies were dropped. Elders again began to teach the young about the traditions of the Northwest Coast. A few craftsmen started to carve and paint totem poles again.

Today there are many more carvers. Old totem poles have been restored. New ones are being carved and raised in traditional ceremonies. The ancient stories and legends of the Coast people are being told once more.

### Why the Sky Is So High

The Creator first made the world in the East. Then he slowly came westward, creating as he went. To each group of people he made, the Creator gave a different language. He scattered many languages around Puget Sound and to the north. That is why so many different Indian languages are spoken there.

Though the people could not talk together, all of them were dissatisfied with the way the Creator had made the sky. The sky was so low that tall people bumped their heads on it. Sometimes people would do a forbidden thing by climbing high in the trees and entering the Sky World.

The wise men of all the different tribes met to see what could be done about lifting the sky. They agreed that the people could do it if everyone—including the animals and the birds, as well as the people—all pushed at the same time.

"How will we know when to push?" asked one wise man. "We don't all talk the same language. How can we get everyone to push together?"

Another man of the council had the idea of using a signal. "When the time comes for us to push," he said, "let someone shout 'Ya-hoh.' That means 'Lift together!' in all our languages."

So the men of the council sent that message to all the people and animals and birds and told them on what day they were to lift the sky. Everyone made poles from the giant fir trees to use in pushing up the sky.

When the day came, the people raised their poles and touched the sky with them. Then the wise men shouted, "Ya-hoh!" All the people and animals and birds pushed, and the sky moved up a little.

"Ya-hoh!" the wise men shouted again, and everybody pushed again. The sky moved a few more inches. "Ya-hoh!" they kept shouting, and everyone pushed with all their strength until the sky rose to the place where it is now. Since then, no one has bumped his head against it, and no one has been able to climb into the Sky World.

See what people can do when we all work together?

—Condensed from a traditional Snohomish story

## American Indians Today

From the brief descriptions in this pamphlet, you have learned some of the difficulties American Indian tribes faced after the arrival of Europeans. Native peoples lost so much that by the late 19th and early 20th centuries, it seemed to some observers that they must be doomed.

Many tribes were wiped out. Others lost huge numbers of their people and all of their lands and possessions. Some, like the Mission Indians of California, lost cultural memories—their Indian ways of living and surviving—after being under missionary rule for many years.

Some people predicted that eventually all Indian cultures and their traditional ways would be lost and that finally the Indians themselves would vanish. The prediction was wrong. Native peoples endured, and today there are about 2 million American Indians living in the United States.

Today, more than half of American Indians live outside the reservations that were set aside for them by the federal government. Many live in big cities; others live in smaller communities and rural areas. While they are fighting to win back some of the things that were taken from them, including their cultural identities, gains have come slowly.

Still, American Indians are taking renewed pride in their heritages and tribal traditions. Traditional religions have survived, despite years of outside influences and official disapproval.

“Indian people in recent years are overturning their image as the ‘invisible Americans,’” notes Dr. David Hurst Thomas. “Many tribes have constructed tourist facilities to encourage your visits: hotels, resorts, historical attractions, camping areas, golf courses, recreational facilities. . . . Many tribes want to show off their heritage and educate you about their past.”

Indians are relearning lost traditions and languages and reviving their arts and crafts, their songs, dances, and stories. Many have chosen not to disappear into America’s “melting pot.”

Indians are reclaiming control over what happens to them. They want to decide for themselves how they will live in the modern world. This will not be an easy decision.

The question is, how can they keep cultural roots alive and protect and preserve tribal identities, yet still be a part of modern society? There is no easy answer, and no one knows what the future holds.

### Famous Names Past and Present

The history of American Indians is filled with the names of men and women who are remembered for deeds that set them apart from others. They may have been renowned leaders, peacemakers, or lawmakers. Some, like Pocahontas, Sacajawea, Mahyohwatha (known as “Hiawatha”), and Tecumseh, lived centuries ago. Others, like Geronimo, Ira Hayes, Ben Nighthorse Campbell, Ada Deer, and Wilma Mankiller, are people of the 20th and 21st centuries.

Find out who are outstanding people in the Indian culture you investigate. Learn as many details as you can about them, so you can tell your story well.

### Visiting Indian Country

Be aware that you enter another sovereign nation when you enter the Indian “reservations” of the United States and the “reserves” of Canada. Always ask tribal managers about any special regulations or permits that may be required for hunting, fishing, hiking, or picnicking.

Stay in public areas. Be especially careful to not trespass on sacred sites.

You may need permission to attend some cultural and religious ceremonies. Be sure to ask. While visitors may be encouraged to attend powwows and take part in certain feast days, there may be other occasions when non-Indian visitors are simply not welcome.

Be prepared to leave your camera, video equipment, and tape recorder behind. You might also be asked not to make sketches or take notes.

Behave as you would when visiting any other religious service. Dress conservatively. Be quiet and respectful.

As you research the tribe you chose to study for requirement 1, be sure to learn about its circumstances or situation today.

## Indian Lore Resources

### Scouting Literature

*Boy Scout Journal*; *North American Indian*; *American Cultures*, *American Heritage*, *Archaeology*, *Archery*, *Architecture*, *Basketry*, *Canoeing*, *Citizenship in the Nation*, *Environmental Science*, *Leatherwork*, *Metallwork*, *Pottery*, *Sculpture*, *Textile*, *Wilderness Survival*, and *Wood Carving* merit badge pamphlets

"The First Americans," an eight-part series. *Boys' Life* magazine, May–December 1993.

For more information about Scouting-related resources, visit (with your parent's permission) the BSA's retail Web site at <http://www.scoutstuff.org>.

### Books

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### CDs and DVDs

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*500 Nations: A Musical Journey*. DVDs (multidisc set). Warner Home Video, 2004.

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- Pow Wow Trail, Episode 6: The Fancy Dance.* DVD. Arbor Records Ltd., 2006.
- Sacagawea: Heroine of the Lewis and Clark Journey.* DVD. Questar, 2003.
- Tales of Wonder: Traditional Native American Stories for Children.* DVDs (two-volume set). Rich Heape Films, 2004.
- Wood That Sings: Indian Fiddle Music of the Americas.* CD. National Museum of the American Indian and Smithsonian/Folkways, 1997.

#### Organizations and Web Sites

**American Indian Heritage Foundation**  
P.O. Box 6301  
Falls Church, VA 22040  
Web site: <http://www.indians.org>  
This organization provides relief services to Native Americans throughout the nation and fosters an understanding relationship between Native and non-native peoples. The AIHF also coordinates scholarship programs for American Indian youth.

#### American Museum of Natural History

Central Park West at 79th Street  
New York, NY 10024-5192  
Telephone: 212-769-5100  
Web site: <http://www.amnh.org>

One of the most famous museums in the world, the American Museum of Natural History has a series of exhibition halls exploring traditional cultures. Since its founding in 1869, the museum's mission has been to discover, interpret, and make available information about human cultures, the natural world, and the universe.

#### Crazy Crow Trading Post

Toll-free telephone: 800-786-6210  
Web site: <http://www.crazycrow.com>

#### Heard Museum

2301 N. Central Ave.  
Phoenix, AZ 85004-1323  
Telephone: 602-252-8848  
Web site: <http://www.heard.org>

This world-renowned museum educates the public "about the heritage and the living cultures and arts of Native peoples, with an emphasis on the peoples of the Southwest."

#### National Congress of

##### American Indians

1301 Connecticut Ave. NW, Suite 200  
Washington, DC 20036  
Telephone: 202-466-7767  
Web site: <http://www.ncai.org>

This organization, founded in 1944, seeks "to preserve rights under Indian treaties or agreements with the United States, and to promote the common welfare of the American Indians and Alaska Natives." The NCAI includes 250 member tribes from throughout the United States; they are listed on the organization's Web site under "Tribal Directory."

#### National Museum of the American Indian

Web site: <http://www.nmai.si.edu>

The NMAI is a museum of the Smithsonian Institution and the "first national museum dedicated to the preservation, study, and exhibition" of American Indian culture. Its extensive collections (housed in three different facilities) explore the life, languages, literature, history, and arts of indigenous Americans, including tribes of the United States, Canada, Middle and South America, and the Caribbean.

#### NativeCulture.com

Web site: <http://www.nativeculture.com>

This Web site offers a variety of links to American Indian resources—current events and news, tribal sites, education, games, and more. It also is home to "Native American Sites" by Lisa Mitten, a page recommended by the Discovery Channel for its thorough coverage of American Indian culture and resources.

#### NativeTech

Web site: <http://www.nativetech.org>  
NativeTech features American Indian technology and craft resources, with a special focus on Eastern Woodlands beadwork, weaving, stonework, pottery, and other crafts. The site also offers Native poetry, recipes, and educational games.

#### NativeWeb

Web site: <http://www.nativeweb.org>

This nonprofit, international Web site provides resources to people of indigenous cultures around the world, including Native Americans. It includes links to everything from art to businesses and products and also hosts *Wotatin Wouapi*, North America's oldest American Indian weekly newspaper.

#### Paul's Supplies

Telephone: 303-948-2767  
Web site: <http://www.paulssupplies.com>

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American Business	2002	Engineering	2008	Photography	2005
American Cultures	2005	Entrepreneurship	2006	Pioneering	2006
American Heritage	2005	Environmental Science	2006	Plant Science	2005
American Labor	2006	Family Life	2005	Plumbing	2004
Animal Science	2005	Farm Mechanics	2005	Pottery	2008
Archaeology	2006	Fingerprinting	2003	Public Health	2005
Archery	2004	Fire Safety	2004	Public Speaking	2002
Architecture	2008	First Aid	2007	Pulp and Paper	2006
Art	2006	Fish and Wildlife Management	2004	Radio	2008
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Athletics	2005	Fly-Fishing	2009	Reading	2003
Automotive Maintenance	2008	Forestry	2005	Reptile and Amphibian Study	2005
Aviation	2005	Gardening	2002	Rifle Shooting	2001
Backpacking	2007	Genealogy	2005	Rowing	2006
Basketry	2003	Geology	2005	Safety	2006
Bird Study	2005	Golf	2002	Salesmanship	2003
Bugling (see Music)		Graphic Arts	2006	Scholarship	2004
Camping	2005	Hiking	2007	Scuba Diving	2009
Canoing	2004	Home Repairs	2009	Sculpture	2007
Chemistry	2004	Horsemanship	2003	Shotgun Shooting	2005
Civics	2008	Indian Lore	2006	Skating	2005
Citizenship in the Community	2005	Insect Study	2008	Small-Boat Sailing	2004
Citizenship in the Nation	2005	Journalism	2006	Snow Sports	2007
Citizenship in the World	2005	Landscape Architecture	2008	Snow Sports	2006
Climbing	2006	Law	2003	Soil and Water Conservation	2004
Coin Collecting	2008	Leatherwork	2002	Space Exploration	2004
Collections	2008	Lifesaving	2008	Sports	2006
Communication	2009	Mammal Study	2003	Stamp Collecting	2007
Composite Materials	2006	Medicine	2009	Surveying	2004
Computers	2009	Metalwork	2007	Swimming	2008
Cooking	2007	Model Design and Building	2003	Taxile	2003
Crime Prevention	2005	Motorboating	2006	Theater	2005
Cycling	2003	Music and Bugling	2003	Traffic Safety	2006
Dairying	2006	Nature	2003	Truck Transportation	2005
Disabilities Awareness	2005	Nuclear Science	2004	Veterinary Medicine	2005
Dog Care	2003	Oceanography	2009	Water Sports	2007
Drafting	2008	Orienteering	2003	Weather	2005
Electricity	2004	Painting	2008	Whitewater	2005
Electronics	2004	Personal Fitness	2006	Wilderness Survival	2007
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