



Blackfoot tepee



Civilizations in North America

Reader

Nakota winter count



Seminole doll



Bison



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Civilizations in North America

Reader



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Civilizations in North America

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Chapter 1

Peoples of the Southeast

The Mound Builders Imagine that you are taking a journey through North America hundreds of years ago. Europeans have not yet arrived on the continent. You start your journey in the Southeast, in the woods of the Mississippi Valley. For thousands of years, people we now call *Mound Builders* lived in the Midwest and Southeast regions of what is today the United States. They were part of what is known as the Mississippian culture. They were farmers who built settlements and traded with people in other areas near and far. Their network of roads and trade routes spanned the entire Mississippi Valley, stretching east and also as far west as the Pacific Ocean. The Mound Builders' society broke apart with the arrival of Europeans. Over time, many new nations formed from the old one, each sharing many cultural beliefs and practices with the others.

The Framing Question

What were the key characteristics of the nations of the Southeast?



This mound was built by the Mound Builders and still stands today.

The Mound Builders get their name from the large mounds they built of soil. Very early mounds were often small and round on top. Over thousands of years, the mounds became larger, with flat tops. The largest mound still standing today, Monk's Mound, is one hundred feet (30.5 m) tall. This was one of more than a hundred other mounds at the Cahokia archaeological site. Although many mounds were round, others were built in various shapes, such as large birds or snakes.

The mounds were used for many purposes, including religious **rituals** and burial of the dead. However, we may never know the full story of how the mounds were used. This information was lost when the Mound Builder society broke up after the arrival of Europeans.

Vocabulary

ritual, n. an act or series of actions done in the same way in a certain situation, such as a religious ceremony

During the height of their society, the Mound Builders of the Mississippian culture were farmers. They settled in one place and grew corn, squash, and beans. They also traded with other nations and built cities, roads, and marketplaces.



Monk's Mound at Cahokia



Cahokia pot



Cahokia ax-head

When Europeans began to arrive in North America in the 1500s CE, the Mound Builder society was greatly impacted. New methods of trading affected traditional ways of life. In addition, the Mississippian people could not fight off the germs and diseases carried by the Europeans. Over the next two centuries, many people died.

Southeast Nations

The region we now know as the Southeast of the United States provided excellent resources for the people who lived there. Trees could be cut into tall poles that could be used to build houses and community buildings. Animals that lived in the woods were

Peoples of the Southeast, circa 1800 CE



The nations of the Southeast were located east of the Mississippi River, from the Ohio River south to the Gulf of Mexico.

hunted for meat and skins. Rivers provided fish and water as well as useful plants, and traders traveled on them to move from one town to another. The Gulf of Mexico and the Atlantic Ocean also provided fish and other seafood. Winters were mild and summers were hot, which allowed for extended growing seasons. The rich soil supported many crops, such as corn.

Surviving descendants of the Mound Builders eventually organized as nations in the Southeast. These nations included the Cherokee, Catawba, Creek **Confederacy**, Seminoles, Choctaw, and Chickasaw, among others.

Vocabulary

confederacy, n. a group of people, organizations, or countries that join together for a common cause

As well as the Creek Confederacy, a nation called the Catawba lived in what is now North Carolina and South Carolina. They spoke a Siouan language, which was different from the language spoken by the peoples of the Creek Confederacy. The Catawba people surrounded their villages with **palisades**. These fences protected Catawba villages from raiders.

Vocabulary

palisade, n. a fence made of sharpened wooden posts

There were also several nations in the region that is now Florida. These included the Calusa, who fished shellfish for food and used the shells as tools. The Belle Glade people built large earthworks similar to the mounds that the Mound Builders created. As with other regions, the cultures of some of the peoples who lived in this region were lost after the arrival of Europeans and the impact of the diseases they brought with them.

Culture and Politics

Most of the peoples of the Southeast shared similar cultural and political structures. Each nation was divided into family groups known as **clans**. These clans might be named for animals, such as the Bear Clan of the Seminole Nation, or for descriptions of people, such as the Long Hair Clan of the Cherokee. The people of a clan felt a strong connection to the animal or trait that their clan was named for.

Vocabulary

clan, n. a group of families claiming a common ancestor

Children belonged to the same clan as their mothers. While the father was an important figure, he was not responsible for raising his children. That responsibility lay with the mother's brothers and other male relatives.

The towns of the Southeast nations were divided into communities that were given a color—either white or red. The clans living in communities labeled white were in charge of peace. There, laws for the members of the nation were made, and peacetime ceremonies were conducted. The clans living in red communities were in charge of war. This was where military attacks were planned and treaties with other nations were written.

However, both military members and **civil** leaders were part of each community.

People in white clans often fought in wars, and people in red clans often made peace agreements with other groups.

Vocabulary

civil, adj. related to the government, not religious or military organizations

Towns were built around a central council house where political activities, ceremonies, and celebrations were held. Towns were led

by a council of chiefs, including a white chief for peace activities and a red chief for war activities. Yet the chiefs were not in total control. The people of a town also took part in government meetings and helped make decisions.

Families lived in rectangular houses. Most had two different houses, including a cool house without walls for the warm summer months. The walls of a winter house often had a roof of bark shingles or **thatch**. Each family might have a small garden near their house where they grew vegetables. However, most food was grown in large fields outside of town, which the entire town worked together to plant and **harvest**.

Corn was a major crop. Before the arrival of Europeans, the only domesticated animal was the dog. Hunters hunted deer and other animals for both meat and skins. After Europeans introduced cattle, hogs, and other livestock, these other animals were added to daily life and people's diets.

Vocabulary

thatch, n. plant materials, such as straw, laid over each other

harvest, v. to gather crops at the end of the growing season

Some Southeast nations, such as the Cherokee, played sports. The Cherokee have long played a game called stickball. In this game, teams compete to get a ball through a goal using sticks rather than their hands or feet.



This structure is a replica of the kind of house that some Cherokee people lived in. It has plaster walls and a thatched roof.

Games were often played simply for fun, but they also helped prepare children for adult life. Additionally, games could be used to settle disagreements between villages without resorting to fighting. Rules were decided before the game began, and both sides agreed to accept the outcome.

Religious and Spiritual Beliefs

There are some questions about the specific religious beliefs of the peoples of the Creek Confederacy and other Southeast cultures. This is because most of what we know about these peoples comes from the writings of Europeans. However, it is likely that they believed in the presence of **supernatural** beings and spirits on Earth, in the sky, and below the ground.

Vocabulary

supernatural, adj.
beyond the world
and laws of nature
that can be seen or
observed

Beliefs varied among the peoples of the Southeast. One Creek belief was that a universal spirit or power exists in all things, in different ways. Individuals inherited this spirit from their mothers, and it was stronger in tribal leaders. The universal spirit was separate from an individual's soul, which Creek peoples believed could exist after death without a body. This soul could be captured and used by others.

Many ceremonies were held throughout the year and played an important role in the beliefs of the peoples of the Southeast. Ceremonies were generally tied to agricultural activities. There were ceremonies for planting, for harvesting, and for beginning a new year. Ceremonial dances had specific steps that were passed

down to each generation. Today, Creek peoples perform the same dances their ancestors did in the 1600s.

An important ceremony shared by most Southeastern peoples was the Green Corn Ceremony. This was a midsummer **busk**, or a time of fasting. It ended in a large feast.

Vocabulary
.....
busk, n. a ceremonial fasting time

The midsummer busk was held when the corn crop ripened. The ceremony lasted for days and included many rituals. An important part of these rituals was the forgiveness of crimes and other wrongdoings. Every crime except for murder was forgiven.

Art, Clothing, and Trade

The nations of the Southeast made items that were both useful and beautiful. For example, many peoples of the Creek Confederacy crafted metal jewelry and stone tools. Southeast peoples also wove cloth for blankets and plant materials for baskets. The tradition of basket weaving by the Cherokee and Choctaw peoples, passed down through generations, continues to this day.



Today, Seminole people continue a tradition of doll making.

Clothing was made mostly from animal skins. Men wore loincloths, which were pieces of skin or fabric that hung from cords tied

around the waist. In colder months, they might have worn leggings and shirts as well. Women wore long skirts. Clothing was often decorated with beads and feathers.

The nations of the Southeast traded widely with each other, as well as with nations in other regions. Before Europeans came to North America, trade networks already stretched across the entire continent, reaching the nations along the Pacific coast. When Europeans arrived, Southeast peoples traded with them for manufactured goods, such as metals and fabrics.

Language

The peoples of the Southeast spoke several languages. Some of these languages were similar enough that people from one group could speak with those in another. Many people in the region were skilled at learning the different languages, which made communication easier.



Sequoyah created the Cherokee syllabary, a set of written characters representing syllables.

The spoken language of the Cherokee also became a written language thanks to a man named Sequoyah. He was born in the 1770s in Tennessee. Sequoyah became interested in books and letters, which he had seen written in English. He invented a set of symbols for the Cherokee language. Its written form allows teachers to more easily pass the language on to children.

Cherokee Alphabet					
D _a	R _e	T _i	Ꮝ _e	Ꮖ _u	i _v
Ꮖ _{ga} Ꮖ _{ka}	Ꮖ _{ge}	Ꮖ _{gi}	A _{ge}	J _{ga}	E _{gv}
Ꮖ _{ha}	Ꮖ _{he}	Ꮖ _{hi}	Ꮖ _{he}	Ꮖ _{hu}	Ꮖ _{hv}
W _{ta}	Ꮖ _{te}	Ꮖ _{ti}	G _{ta}	M _{ta}	A _{lv}
Ꮖ _{na}	Ꮖ _{ne}	H _{mi}	Ꮖ _{no}	Ꮖ _{nu}	
Ꮖ _{na} Ꮖ _{naa} G _{naa}	A _{ne}	h _{ai}	Z _{no}	A _{me}	C _{rv}
E _{qua}	Ꮖ _{que}	Ꮖ _{qui}	Ꮖ _{qua}	Ꮖ _{quu}	E _{quv}
U _{na} Ꮖ _{na}	Ꮖ _{ve}	B _{ve}	Ꮖ _{ve}	Ꮖ _{va}	R _{sv}
Ꮖ _{na} W _{na}	Ꮖ _{ve} Ꮖ _{ve}	J _{ai} J _{ai}	A _{va}	S _{va}	Ꮖ _{dv}
Ꮖ _{na} Ꮖ _{na}	L _{va}	C _{ai}	Ꮖ _{va}	Ꮖ _{va}	P _{dv}
G _{va}	T _{va}	h _{ai}	K _{va}	J _{va}	C _{va}
C _{va}	Ꮖ _{ve}	Ꮖ _{va}	Ꮖ _{va}	Ꮖ _{va}	G _{va}
Ꮖ _{va}	B _{ve}	Ꮖ _{va}	Ꮖ _{va}	G _{va}	B _{va}

Sounds represented by vowels.

<i>a</i> as <i>a</i> in <i>father</i> or short as <i>a</i> in <i>trav</i> <i>e</i> as <i>e</i> in <i>bet</i> or short as <i>e</i> in <i>met</i> <i>i</i> as <i>i</i> in <i>pin</i> or short as <i>i</i> in <i>pit</i>	<i>o</i> as <i>o</i> in <i>law</i> or short as <i>o</i> in <i>not</i> <i>u</i> as <i>u</i> in <i>foot</i> or short as <i>u</i> in <i>put</i> <i>y</i> as <i>y</i> in <i>but</i> , nasalized.
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Consonant Sounds.

g nearly as in English, but approaching to *k*. *d* nearly as in English, but approaching to *t*. *h*, *k*, *l*, *m*, *n*, *q*, *s*, *t*, *v*, *w*, *y*, as in English. Syllables beginning with *g*, except *Ꮖ* have sometimes the power of *k*, *s*, *s* or are sometimes sounded to, *ta*, *te*, and syllables written with *Ꮖ*, except *Ꮖ*, sometimes vary to *di*. —

(Indians' orthography.)

Today, two thousand people speak Cherokee as their first language.

PRIMARY SOURCE: CHEROKEE HANDCRAFTS



Chapter 2

Peoples of the Plains

The Great Plains Now imagine that your journey around North America continues west to the Great Plains—vast stretches of grassland in the middle of what is now the United States. The Great Plains might make you think of cowboys on horseback, but there were no horses in North America hundreds of years ago. Ancestors of horses once existed on the continent, but they died off at the end of the Ice Age, many thousands of years ago. Modern horses were introduced to the Americas by the Spanish. They were likely not common among Native peoples of the Great Plains until the 1750s.

The Framing Question

What were the key characteristics of the nations of the Plains?

Long before Europeans arrived, many peoples of the Plains lived in towns built along a river. There, they could more easily travel and get food and water. The people in these towns grew crops such as corn, beans, and squash. They cleared the land, tilled the soil, planted seeds, watered plants, and harvested and preserved the crops.



The Plains of North America are large, rolling grasslands with mostly short trees.

However, many other Plains peoples were nomadic, meaning they regularly moved from one place to another. They fed themselves by gathering plants to eat and hunting **bison**, sometimes called buffalo.

Vocabulary

bison, n. a large animal similar to a cow or ox

Bison travel in herds and mostly eat grass. Before Europeans brought horses to North America, Plains peoples hunted bison by first herding them into an area that was difficult to escape. It was tiring and very hard work to do on foot. Many people were needed to bring down just one animal.

Plains peoples used every part of the bison. From the hides, or skins, they made clothing, robes, shoes, arrow quivers, medicine bags, shields, and drums. From bison hair, they made pillows and ropes. They carved bison horns to make cups, spoons, and ladles. Bones were made into **awls**, knives, shovels, and war clubs. Even bison dung was useful because it could be burned as fuel for a fire.

Vocabulary

awl, n. a sharp, pointed tool used for sewing and making holes



Plains peoples hunted bison for food and clothing.

Plains Nations

The peoples of the Plains organized themselves in different ways. Some remained as **tribes**, while other groups organized themselves as large nations, as in the Southeast. These included the Crow, Cheyenne, Pawnee, Mandan, Arapaho, and Comanche west of the Missouri River and the Hidatsa, Arikara, Yankton, and Iowa east of the Missouri River.

Vocabulary

tribe, n. a group of people who share the same language, customs, beliefs, and leadership

Peoples of the Plains, circa 1850 CE



The Great Plains, in the middle of what is now the United States, were home to many nations.

These many nations and tribes, spread over a large area, spoke many different languages. One tribe, the Mandan, who lived near the Missouri River, spoke a Siouan language. Yet because people from different nations came together from time to time while hunting or trading, they needed to be able to communicate. They developed a **sign language** separate from spoken language. The sign language was shared by many different nations to communicate with one another.

Vocabulary

sign language, n. a language that uses gestures instead of speech

tepee, n. a home made by stretching animal skin around poles in the shape of a cone

Life on the Plains

Nomadic peoples of the Plains developed homes in the shape of cones, called **tepees**. Each tepee was made of several long wooden poles placed in a circle with their tops touching. The walls were animal skins that were stretched around the poles. Tepees could be easily taken down, moved, and put up again. Tepees were also lightweight and easy to carry from place to place.

However, not all Plains peoples were nomadic all year long. Those who lived in villages



This photo from the late 1800s shows a man at the entrance of a tepee.



Earthen lodges, such as this Mandan lodge, were constructed so that they were partially underground. They included a wood-framed entryway.

or towns did not need homes that could easily be moved. They lived in earth lodges. These homes were made of wooden beams with walls of earth and prairie grass. The floors were dug into the ground, creating a pit that offered excellent protection from winds and harsh weather. Women typically built and maintained these homes, which could house extended families of up to twenty people.

At large gatherings, as well as at other times, trade occurred between nations. It was especially common for nomadic tribes and farming tribes to trade with each other. The nomadic tribes had more goods from hunting, such as meat and skins. The farming tribes had more crops. In addition, the peoples of the Great Plains were part of trade networks that connected nations across North America. Some nations, such as the Cheyenne, served as go-betweens. They carried goods for trade between nations in the northern Great Plains and those in the southern Great Plains.

The **calumet**, sometimes called a peace pipe, could be vital to trade. This pipe was shared by people from different groups who wished to buy and sell with each other. Sharing the calumet signaled an agreement, at least temporarily, to set aside arguments. For nations that often warred with each other, the calumet ceremony helped ensure that trade could be done in peace.

Vocabulary

calumet, n. a pipe smoked ceremonially to signal a peace agreement

Family and Society

Hundreds of years ago, boys growing up on the Great Plains listened to stories of how warriors gained glory. Parents and other



Sitting Bull, a famous Teton (Lakota) Sioux chief, is shown holding a calumet in this photo from 1884.

respected adults spoke of tribal heroes and traditions, passing on their strong sense of justice and honorable behavior. While playing with bows and arrows and learning to handle horses and hunt small game, boys prepared for adult life. Accompanying adult males on bison hunts, joining war parties, and going through **initiation rites** marked a teenage boy's gradual entrance into manhood. Tribal ceremonies celebrated their accomplishments.

Vocabulary

initiation rite, n.
an act that a person must complete to join a group

Girls also learned from the adults around them. Women turned bison hides into fur robes and tepees. They gathered edible plants and, among agricultural tribes, took care of crops. They cooked, sewed, and did beadwork. In nomadic tribes, they were largely responsible for moving camping sites during the hunting season.



Women played important roles in the lives of Plains peoples.

Girls learned these skills from their mothers and other older women. Like boys, they had their own rituals to mark their entry into adulthood.

Children also had special relationships with their grandparents. While children were expected to be respectful and obedient to their parents, this was not always the case with grandparents. Children and grandparents could joke, make fun of each other, and play pranks on each other.

As in the Southeast, the peoples of the Plains were organized into clans based on family relationships. In many Plains groups, people traced their descent from their mother's ancestors. Others traced it from their father's ancestors. Still others traced descent from both their mother's and father's ancestors. While some nations gave clan status only through one parent, nearly all of them expected families of both parents to help raise and teach children.

Plains peoples were also organized into **bands**. Bands worked together for a shared goal, such as hunting or harvesting. Unlike clans, which were always the same, bands could change. People could shift from one band to another if they chose to move to a new town or travel with a new group.

Vocabulary

band, n. a group of people who work together for a goal

Each tribe or nation was led by chiefs, positions sometimes passed down within a family. To be a chief, a person had to prove that they were brave, smart, and capable. There were sometimes several families that passed down the position in case a chief was

not successful. An unsatisfactory chief from one family could then easily be replaced by a chief from a different family.

Religious and Spiritual Beliefs

Each nation of the Plains had its own belief system and religious practices. Yet there were some similar beliefs they all shared, including **animism**. This is the belief that everything that exists has a spirit. This includes not just people and animals but also objects, places, and natural occurrences, such as wind or lightning.

Most Plains nations had a **shaman**, a religious leader who could speak with spirits. The shaman was responsible for religious ceremonies, including the use of the **sweat lodge**. A sweat lodge is a structure that is filled with steam by pouring water over heated stones. The steam makes people sweat, which was thought to purify the body.

An important ceremony for people of the Plains nations was the **vision quest**.

Often, a vision quest was a rite of passage into adulthood. However, a person might also complete a vision quest to prepare for an important undertaking. This person would travel into the wilderness, where they would remain by themselves without eating or drinking for several days. It was believed that a spirit would then appear to the person to help guide them.

Vocabulary

animism, n. the belief that objects, places, and creatures all possess a specific spiritual essence

shaman, n. a religious leader who can talk to spirits

sweat lodge, n. a building where water is poured over hot rocks to make steam

vision quest, n. a religious ritual that involves going into the wilderness to get help from a spirit guide



The Cheyenne people formed a sweat lodge by covering frames such as this one with fabric. This would trap the steam that formed when water was poured over the hot rocks.

Another key ceremony was the **Sun Dance**.

This ceremony commonly involved several sun dancers, who would be surrounded by their families. The sun dancers, who in rare cases were pierced by needles or skewers, would fast and dance for several days and nights. The purpose of the Sun Dance was to gain spiritual power or insight, as well as to give thanks.

Vocabulary

Sun Dance, n. a religious ritual that involves fasting and dancing

Clothing and Art

Most clothing of the Plains peoples was made of hides. Men wore loincloths or leggings, and in colder months they might have also worn shirts or robes. Their shoes were moccasins—flat-soled

leather slippers held together with a tie. Women wore dresses that reached the knee. They wore moccasins as well.

One elaborate article in most Plains nations was the **war bonnet**, which has sometimes been called a headdress. This was a sort of headwear decorated with eagle feathers. Each feather had to be earned by way of a brave deed or action that was important for the community. In some nations, the feathers had to be given as gifts to the wearer. War bonnets were reserved for special occasions and important ceremonies.

Many Plains nations created art on rocks. They carved or painted scenes that told stories of important battles, successful hunts, or other memorable events. For many nations, the four directions (north, south, east, and west) were **sacred**, and each was associated with a specific color. The **medicine wheel** was an object or



The war bonnet symbolizes a person's bravery and good deeds.

Vocabulary

war bonnet, n. an article worn on the head and decorated with eagle feathers

sacred, adj. holy or religiously important

medicine wheel, n. an object or artwork that symbolizes the four directions using certain colors

artwork that depicted these directions and colors. Medicine wheels were made to bring health and good fortune to people.



Today, Native peoples still honor the medicine wheel, such as this one made of painted rocks on tribal lands in North Dakota. Common colors for the medicine wheel are red, white, yellow, and black.

War

Most Plains nations highly valued the bravery of warriors—even more than their success in battle. Warriors often cared more about demonstrating superior courage than about killing their enemies.

They gained status by **counting coup**, or physically touching the enemy with a hand or a specific coupstick rather than a weapon. The higher a warrior's count, the more skilled they were. Coup could also be counted by stealing from the enemy. Stealing food, and later horses, was considered especially important. Counts were marked by adding feathers to the warrior's war bonnet.

Vocabulary

counting coup, v.
touching the body
of an enemy warrior
without killing them

**PRIMARY SOURCE: A YANKTON (NAKOTA) SIOUX
WINTER COUNT**



Chapter 3

Peoples of the Northeast

The Eastern Woodlands The next stop in your journey back in time is the Northeast, also called the Eastern Woodlands. This region stretches from the Great Lakes to the Atlantic coast. For peoples living hundreds of years ago, it was a place of abundance. Wooded lands provided plenty of food and water for all forms of life—as well as lots of wood to use to build homes, boats, tools, furniture, and other useful items. The people living in this region created a thriving, unique culture.

The Framing Question

What were the key characteristics of the nations of the Northeast?

By 1500 CE, many different Native peoples were living in the Northeast region. Although there were many different nations, we can think of them as making up three groups based on language: those who spoke Algonquian languages, those who spoke Iroquoian languages, and those who spoke Siouan languages. The peoples of the western part of the region, such as the Ojibwe, spoke Algonquian languages.



The Eastern Woodlands offered much to the people living there, including plenty of wood for building.

Peoples of the Northeast, circa 1600 CE



The Northeast nations lived around the Great Lakes and as far east as the Atlantic coast.

The peoples of the eastern nations spoke Iroquoian and Siouan languages. For example, the Haudenosaunee spoke Iroquoian languages, and the Ho-Chunk spoke Siouan.

The landscape of the Northeast region at the time was mostly forest. This provided wood for building and fuel, as well as roots, berries, and nuts for food. The forest was also home to animals, such as deer and bears, that people hunted for food and fur. Most people lived in clearings that were near creeks, rivers, lakes, or ponds and between forested areas. The lakes and rivers provided an almost year-round supply of fish. The shallows around the edges of the Great Lakes also provided wild rice, which was gathered rather than farmed.

The Three Sisters

Besides eating the food that was available just outside their homes, the peoples of the Northeast grew crops. The soil was rich, though in some areas the growing season was short. In some areas, the soil was also very rocky. Corn, beans, and squash were the main crops. One Northeast people, the Haudenosaunee, called these main crops the *three sisters* because they provided good overall **nutrition** and could be grown together in a way that benefited all three plants.

There was a very specific way of planting the three sisters. Corn seeds and beans were planted in little mounds, one step apart. The beans could climb up the corn stalks as they grew taller. Squash was grown in the low areas between the mounds. The broad leaves of the squash plants provided shade to stop weeds from growing and to keep the ground from drying out in the sun. All three plants helped each other grow well in the rich soil.

Vocabulary

nutrition, n. the nourishment people get from food that helps them grow and stay healthy

wigwam, n. a domed dwelling built by peoples of the Northeast, made of poles tied together and covered

Home, Family, and Society

The peoples of the Northeast lived in villages. They built their houses out of forest materials. Nations that lived around the Great Lakes, such as the Ojibwe and Ho-Chunk, built **wigwams**, also called *wickiups*. A wigwam had a framework of poles set into the ground in a circle. The poles were tied together at the top to make a dome.

Bark, reeds, or mats were used for the walls. Fires were built in the middle of the floor, and smoke escaped through a hole at the top.



Wigwams usually housed a single family.

The people of other Northeast nations who lived near the coast of the Atlantic Ocean, including the Mohawk and Cayuga, lived in **longhouses**. Longhouses also used a frame of wooden poles, but the framework was covered with bark.

Longhouses get their name from their shape: a long rectangle with a door at each end. Like wigwams, longhouses had fire pits in the center of the room and holes in the roof that allowed smoke to escape. Longhouses were about twenty feet (6 m) wide and could be long or short, depending on how many families lived in them. A typical longhouse held ten families who lived around five fire pits.

Vocabulary

longhouse, n. a rectangular house made of bark panels on a frame of wooden poles

All of the societies of the Northeast were structured around clans. Most of these clans were based on the mother's family, but some, such as the Ho-Chunk, used a system based on the father's clan. Clan



A longhouse served as a home to many families.

groups occupied their own longhouses. Many generations of women, along with their husbands and young children, would live in a longhouse together.

In the Ojibwe nation, clans were associated with *dodems*, or symbols such as Crane and Bear. Each dodem was associated with a particular trait. Crane and Loon clans were leaders, while Catfish clans were teachers and philosophers. People were expected to behave in the way of their clan and work together for the good of their people.

Many nations lived in the same place all the time, but others, such as the Ojibwe, moved throughout the year. The Ojibwe spent the winter living in small family groups in their own hunting areas. The groups gathered together in larger villages in spring and summer.

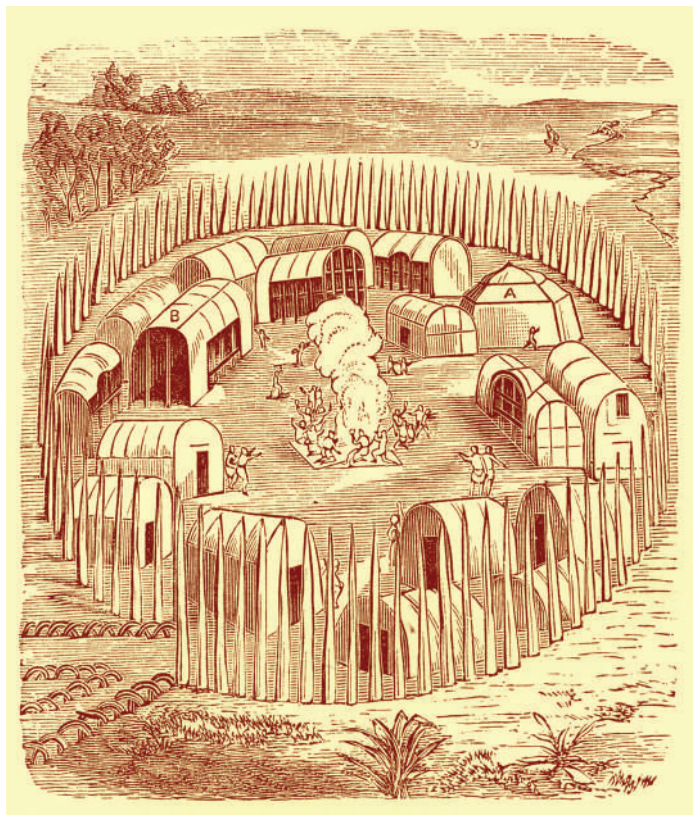
The Mahican people lived in the valley of the Hudson River. Their name comes from *muh-he-cn-nuk*, meaning great water that is always moving. Stories passed down for many generations tell how the Mahican people crossed over the water that gave them their name. This water, says the legend, was far in the north.

There, two lands were nearly connected. Then the Mahican traveled east and crossed many rivers. Finally, they found a place to settle near the Hudson River. For years, the Mahican fought against neighboring nations, including the Mohawk, their most bitter enemy. Both groups eventually became known as great fighters due to their continued battles.

Government and Politics

One Eastern Woodlands legend tells the story of an Onondaga man named Hiawatha. Distressed by all the fighting he observed among Northeast nations, he left his home and wandered in the wilderness.

During his wanderings, he met a Huron man named Deganawida. Together, Hiawatha and Deganawida developed the idea of a confederacy that would unite the nations and create peace. They succeeded in leading the formation of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy, which was made up of the



Haudenosaunee villages such as this one were sometimes built on hilltops. This location provided a natural defense, as did the palisades surrounding the village.

Mohawk, the Onondaga, the Seneca, the Oneida, and the Cayuga. Most of these peoples lived in what is now the state of New York. This unified group is also known as the Iroquois Confederacy.

The goal of the confederacy was to keep the peace among themselves and unite against enemies. They agreed that each nation would keep its own chiefs,

Vocabulary

sachem, n. a chief of a Northeast nation

or **sachems**. These sachems would also be the members of the League Council, which governed the confederacy. This meant that each nation in the confederacy still ruled itself independently; matters affecting all nations were decided by the League Council. The confederacy's form of government was so effective that it is still in use today. It is sometimes said that the Haudenosaunee Confederacy influenced how the structure of government is described in the United States Constitution.

Religious and Spiritual Beliefs

Like many other nations, most peoples of the Northeast believed in animism. They believed that every living thing, object, and place had a spirit.

The Ojibwe developed a religious society known as the Grand Medicine Society, or *Midewiwin*. This society is made up of priests of varying levels of knowledge and ability. Priests go through years of training and sacred rites to achieve their ranks. They perform religious rituals and serve as spiritual leaders for their people. They also serve as healers. The Ojibwe also value the seven teachings, sometimes called the *seven grandfathers*.

These are values they believe every person should try to practice: wisdom, love, respect, bravery, truth, humility, and honesty. The Ojibwe think these values should guide every action a person takes.

One of the core values of the peoples of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy was the seventh generation principle. This

principle held that everyone has a responsibility to the people of the seventh generation after them. In other words, a person owes responsibility to the children born to their grandchildren's grandchildren's grandchildren. This principle still guides people to make decisions that preserve the natural world and keep their cultures and languages alive.

Most Northeast nations celebrated festivals that centered on foods and the harvest. Today, people of the Haudenosaunee nations celebrate a midwinter festival, a strawberry harvest ceremony, and a corn harvest festival.



Hiawatha left his home and wandered in the wilderness.

Art, Clothing, and Trade

Generally, the nations of the Northeast did not consider art separate from other aspects of life. Art was part of everyday objects, traditions, and even games and sports.

An important art form was **wampum**, a bead made from clamshells. The beads were very difficult to make, so wampum was extremely valuable. Wampum

beads were strung together and sometimes woven into belts. The designs of these strings and belts had great significance. A wampum string or belt could symbolize a person's standing in their clan or nation, as well as stand for peace and truth during meetings.

People in the nations of the Northeast wore clothing made of animal skins for warmth because the region is cool or cold for much of the year. In warmer weather, men wore loincloths.

Vocabulary

wampum, n. a bead made from clamshells



This wampum belt was made in the 1700s. It may have been designed to be worn on a person's wrist.

Women wore skirts or dresses.
People wore moccasins as well.
Clothing might be decorated with
beads and porcupine quills.

An important article of clothing
for men was the *gustoweh*. This
was a hat decorated with beads
and feathers. The arrangement
of the feathers showed which
nation the wearer belonged to.
For example, Mohawk men wore
gustowehs with three feathers
pointing up, while Onondaga
men's gustowehs had one feather
pointing up and one pointing down.

Prior to the arrival of Europeans, trade among the nations of the
Eastern Woodlands was relatively simple. The land provided so
much that each nation's needs were well met. Groups traded with
each other for exotic goods that they did not have locally. The
most valuable items were shells used to make wampum.



The position of feathers on a gustoweh
varied among nations.

PRIMARY SOURCE: EXCERPT FROM THE HAUDENOSAUNEE GREAT LAW OF PEACE

1. I am Dekanawidah and with the Five Nations' Confederate Lords I plant the Tree of Great Peace. . . . I name the tree the Tree of the Great Long Leaves. . . .

2. Roots have spread out from the Tree of the Great Peace, one to the north, one to the east, one to the south and one to the west. The name of these roots is The Great White Roots and their nature is Peace and Strength. If any man or any nation outside the Five Nations shall obey the laws of the Great Peace and make known their disposition to the Lords of the Confederacy, they may trace the Roots to the Tree and if their minds are clean and they are obedient and promise to obey the wishes of the Confederate Council, they shall be welcomed to take shelter beneath the Tree of the Long Leaves. We place at the top of the Tree of the Long Leaves an Eagle who is able to see afar. If he sees in the distance any evil approaching or any danger threatening he will at once warn the people of the Confederacy.

Chapter 4

Peoples of the Southwest

The Cliff Dwellers Your journey through North America now takes you to the hot, dry regions of what we know today in the United States as the Southwest. You may hear the rhythmic sound of a girl grinding corn for the evening meal. You might then see a woman filling water jars by the river, standing not far from a man who is returning home from a hunting and trading trip.

The Framing Question

What were the key characteristics of the nations of the Southwest?

Vocabulary

cliff dweller, n. a person who lives on a rock ledge or cliff wall, such as a member of the Ancestral Pueblo people

canyon, n. a deep valley cut through rock by river water

All of these were regular scenes of daily life for the **cliff dwellers**, one of the ancient peoples of what is now the American Southwest. In this region, **canyons** cross the land, carved by rivers that are important sources of water. Cliff dwellers built homes into the cliffs that form the walls of the canyons.



The remains of what is today known as the Cliff Palace, an Ancestral Pueblo cliff dwelling, still stand in Mesa Verde, Colorado.

The Early Peoples of the Southwest, circa 1000 CE



Different groups lived in the southwestern region of what is now the United States. Today, historians divide these groups into the Ancestral Pueblo, the Hohokam, and the Mogollon.

Thousands of years ago, groups known today as Pueblo peoples moved into this area. They likely hunted animals and gathered wild plants for food. Eventually, they began to form settlements and grow corn. Weather conditions in the region change greatly throughout the year, with summer being very hot and dry and winter being cold and wet.

Pueblo peoples built their homes of **adobe**, a building material made partially of sun-dried clay that could be formed into bricks. Clay soil was readily available, and thick adobe walls provided good insulation against the heat of the

Vocabulary

adobe, n. a building material made partially of sun-dried clay

Vocabulary

kiva, n. an underground structure used for everyday and ceremonial purposes

Southwest desert. The Ancestral Pueblo constructed huge buildings in their villages, with dozens or even hundreds of rooms.

Families also built underground structures, known as **kivas**, in which they performed ceremonies as well as day-to-day activities such as cooking and sleeping. Each community also built a grand kiva, where the whole community would gather for ceremonies and rituals. The use of kivas as ceremonial and meeting spaces continued with later peoples as well.



The remains of a kiva ruin show its round shape and the fire pit located near the center.

The Pueblo, Apache, and Diné

The Pueblo peoples were not the only groups who lived in the Southwest long ago. Several hundred years ago, other groups of people arrived in the region from what is now Canada. One of these groups is known today as Apache. Another group is known as Navajo or Diné. Both names, Navajo and Diné, refer to the same people. *Diné* is the word the people use to refer to themselves, while others call them Navajo. Today, the Diné accept the word *Navajo* as a name for their nation.

When the Apache and Diné arrived in the Southwest, they lived peacefully near the Pueblo peoples for a while. However,

something happened that put an end to this peace. Historians today do not know for sure what that might have been. One possibility is that a drought occurred. People might have fought over access to water. A drought could also have caused food shortages, leading one group to attack another group to get food. Whatever the cause, fighting broke out among the Apache, Diné, and Pueblo peoples.

Soon after the feuding began, Europeans arrived in the Southwest. There were more conflicts and battles. Today, tribes known as

Peoples of the Southwest, circa 1880 CE



The Pueblo peoples were joined in the Southwest by other nations, including the Apache and the Diné, or Navajo.

Pueblo live in the region, as do the Diné and Apache. Some people in these tribes live in adobe houses, as peoples in the region did so long ago.

Pueblo Life

The houses of the Pueblo peoples were made of adobe and had many rooms in one building. The Pueblo peoples improved building techniques so that they could build many stories high.

Upper stories were set back from lower ones, creating a stepped structure. The roofs

of lower levels were used as terraces, or decks, for the higher levels. Higher stories were usually accessed by ladder. Ground-level floors often had no doors; people could pull up the ladders and prevent entry in the case of attack. This system made Pueblo villages easier to defend.

Anthropologists today recognize two groups of Pueblo peoples: the eastern and the western. The eastern groups speak Tanoan and Keresan languages. The western groups speak Keresan, Zuni, and Hopi languages.

The family was very important to the Pueblo peoples. Their large buildings with many rooms could house several generations of a family. Families were organized into clans. Depending on the



Pueblo construction techniques, like those used to build this part of an old town, are still used in the Southwest today.

group, either the father's or the mother's family line determined clan membership. Each clan managed a specific part of life, such as agriculture or warfare. Members of the clan became experts in their domain and passed on their knowledge and traditions to younger clan members.

Religious beliefs affected all parts of life and were also tied to the clans. Each clan had its rites and rituals to perform. But all Pueblo peoples shared the belief that they should treat their land as sacred and as the ongoing home of their ancestors.

In addition to food crops, Pueblo peoples grew cotton. They wove cotton cloth and wore cotton clothing. Men wore a kilt, a garment similar to a skirt, along with a shirt. Women wore dresses. Pueblo clothing could be dyed many colors and decorated with paint and embroidery.

The Pueblo economy included trade with other nations. Each nation had specialized trade goods, such as textiles, turquoise minerals, and copper.



Today, the Pueblo people perform some of the same ceremonies as their ancestors, such as the Buffalo Dance.

Apache Life

The Apache spoke languages in the Athabaskan language family. Athabaskan languages are still spoken by many people in present-day Canada and Alaska, where the Apache were originally from.

The Apache traced their family through their mothers and lived in small family groups. In the Southwest, their homes were either tepees or huts called **wickiups**, both of which were simple to assemble and could be adapted for hot or cool weather. Both sorts of Apache homes were suited to their nomadic lifestyle. Apache people did some farming but relied more on hunting and gathering, along with trading. They also often raided nearby settlements or encampments to steal goods.

Vocabulary

wickiup, n. a hut made from a frame of bent grass or bark-covered branches

Apache people often lived in bands of a few extended families led by a chief. The position of chief was earned rather than inherited. If a chief made a bad decision, everyone was free not to follow it, and the chief might be replaced.

The Apache religion was centered on nature. People thought of parts of the natural world as having a force or energy that could impact their good fortune and health. Apache people also considered four mountainous areas to be sacred: Sierra Blanca, Three Sisters Mountains, Oscura Mountain Peak, and Guadalupe Mountains. These mountains are in New Mexico and western Texas. Their connections to these mountains and the land remain very important to the Apache people.



The Sierra Blanca mountains in New Mexico are considered sacred by the Apache.

Apache clothing was traditionally made from animal hides. Men wore loincloths in warm weather and shirts and leggings in cold weather. Women wore dresses. Clothing was decorated with fringe and beadwork.

Diné Life

Like the Apache, the Diné, or Navajo, came to the Southwest region from present-day Canada, so they speak languages in the same Athabaskan family. The Navajo language played an important role in World War II when many Diné men joined the U.S. military. They used their language as a “code” because it was completely unknown to enemy forces. These Navajo Code Talkers, as they were known, were vital to winning the war.

The Diné did not typically live in villages. Each family lived in a **hogan**, a home made of logs or stone packed with mud.

Vocabulary

hogan, n. a home made of logs or stone



Modern hogons usually have six or eight sides, but traditionally they were round or conical.

The heavy use of mud kept the hogon cool in the hot summer, like the inside of a cave. The door of a hogon faced east to admit the rising sun. Originally, hogons were rounded domes, but over time, they became six- or eight-sided buildings. Hogons are still used by many Diné people today.

Before European contact, the Diné were governed through group decision-making within clans. Clans were organized according to the mother's family.

As with many other Native nations across North America, the Diné did not separate the everyday world and the supernatural. They recognized many supernatural beings, which they called Holy People. These beings had the power to influence everyday events on Earth.

Diné singers are religious figures trained in healing practices. Singers perform religious ceremonies that identify illnesses and restore health and balance to a person's life. A goal of Diné people is to achieve balance and harmony in life, known as *hózhó*.

Long ago, the Diné wore clothing made of animal skins and yucca fibers. **Yucca** is a plant with tough, spiked leaves that grows in the Southwest. Men wore loincloths or leggings, and women wore two-piece dresses. Shoes were made of yucca fibers.

Vocabulary
.....
yucca, n. a plant that grows in the Southwest that has tough leaves

The Diné have long been known for their woven rugs and blankets. After sheep were introduced to the region by Europeans, the Diné wove rugs made of wool that was dyed white, black, gray, or brown. Their designs included geometric shapes and zigzags. When new dyes became available in the 1800s, the colors of these designs became even brighter.

The Diné have used turquoise in jewelry making since before European contact. After the Spanish introduced silver in the 1800s, they also learned very fine silversmithing techniques.



Young Diné girl wearing turquoise and ceremonial dress

PRIMARY SOURCE: NAVAJO YEI RUGS



Chapter 5

Peoples of the West Coast

The Pacific Coast The final stage of your journey throughout North America has brought you even farther west—all the way to the Pacific Ocean. The western coast of North America was home to many peoples. This large region varies greatly in geography and climate, so many of these peoples led very different lives from each other. The Pacific Northwest extends from southern Alaska and along Canada's coastline to Washington, Oregon, and northern California. Pacific Northwest peoples lived in a rugged, windy region between the majestic Pacific Coast Ranges to the east and the crashing waves of the Pacific Ocean to the west. To the south, in what is today California, other groups lived in a drier, hotter climate, with the deserts of the Southwest to the east and the Pacific Ocean to the west.

The Framing Question

What were the key characteristics of the nations of the West Coast?



The Pacific Northwest has a rugged coastline.

The coastal area of the Pacific Northwest is about one hundred miles (161 km) wide and one thousand miles (1,600 km) long. It has more than two thousand miles (3,200 km) of jagged shoreline. The weather is mild, due to the moderating effects of the ocean. The area does not have the temperature extremes that occur in other regions of North America that you have read about, like the Great Plains. Temperatures generally range from 35°F to 45°F (2°C to 7°C) in January and from 55°F to 65°F (13°C to 18°C) in July.

The Pacific Northwest is also moist. In some areas, 150 inches (3.8 m) of rain falls every year—enough rain to make a twelve-foot-deep (3.7 m) swimming pool overflow! All those rainstorms, along with fogs and moist winds, make for lush forests that teem with plants and animals. Redwood and cedar trees tower many stories above the land. These trees provided the people of the Pacific Northwest nations with building supplies, food, and other natural resources.

South of the Pacific Northwest is the region that is now the state of California. The geography of this region is highly varied, ranging from thick forests to high mountains to hot deserts. Mountain ranges run along California's east and west. Central California, between the Coast Ranges and the high Sierra Nevada range, includes the large, fertile San Joaquin Valley. In the south are high and low deserts, including Death Valley, which is both the hottest and the lowest place in North America. The Pacific Ocean keeps the coastal areas cooler, but inland temperatures in this region often exceed 100°F (38°C). The peoples who lived in this region hundreds of years ago had to adjust for the variety of geography and climate when deciding where to settle.

Peoples of the West Coast, circa 1850 CE



The West Coast is a huge region, extending from the Arctic Circle almost to the tropics. It has been home to many different peoples.

Life in the West

The peoples of the Pacific Northwest did not farm. The land and the ocean provided all they needed. They hunted and gathered wild plants in the forest, and they fished in the rivers and the ocean. They built their homes from the trees of the forest, and they used those trees to make canoes.

The forest, ocean, and rivers provided so much that people settled in large towns instead of moving among regions. The houses they built were huge, housing as many as fifty people. They were shaped like squares or rectangles and had a large pit at the center. The pit contained the fire in cold weather.

To the south, the peoples of what is now California also did not farm. They too lived off of the abundant resources the land provided. They hunted and fished, and they gathered wild plants that grew in the rich soil. Some nations lived in places where food was plentiful all year, so they had permanent villages. In the warmer, drier areas in central California, people lived in homes that were built partly underground, which kept them cool. Others lived in places where food was scarcer and changed with the season. These people lived in temporary villages that they moved often. For example, in the hot, dry regions in the south, people lived in homes made of the plants that grew in the region. These could easily be taken down and rebuilt when the people had to move.

Social Organization

Peoples in the Pacific Northwest had a very specific society, in which social rank was extremely important. People were divided into

different house groups based on their family.

Each family was led by a chief, a position that was inherited but could be obtained only through a **potlatch**. To take over this position of leadership, new chiefs had to host potlatches honoring the former chief and showing that they had the resources to lead their house group. Potlatches included feasts as well as gifts for all those who attended. Potlatches were also held for many other reasons, including marriage, a child's birth, the naming of a child, and a coming of age.

Vocabulary

potlatch, n. a huge ceremony and celebration that can last days or even weeks

The chief was at the top level of society. Everyone else held a position that was higher or lower in social status than others based on how closely related they were to the chief. At the bottom of the social rank were enslaved people, who were generally prisoners captured in war.

The powerful chief also had a great deal of responsibility. Chiefs determined the house group's activities, such as when to hunt, when to fish, and when to hold feasts. They also helped resolve conflicts between people. Besides leading their own houses, chiefs worked together in councils to make decisions for the larger community. However, enslaved people were not permitted to share their opinions with the chief.

California villages were also often led by a chief, although nations differed in how the chiefs gained their positions. For some, it was inherited. For others, leadership was based on making good decisions. People followed the chiefs who made the best decisions and could choose not to follow them if they made bad ones.

Religious and Spiritual Beliefs

The Pacific Northwest nations did not separate the spiritual from everyday life. They believed that the spirits of supernatural beings were in all things. For this reason, they thanked the spirits of the animals they killed for food. They respected all natural things, including plants and animals.

Some nations, such as the Coast Salish, believe that personal power and success are gifted to people by spirits. Rituals and ceremonies are held to honor these spirits and ask for their aid.

Although the beliefs of each nation in what is now California were different, there were two general religious systems: one based on *toloache* and the other called *Kuksu*. *Toloache* is a plant, also called *Jimsonweed*. The plant was ingested as part of the religious practices. The *Kuksu* religion centers on a few supernatural beings. Priest dancers wore elaborate costumes to represent those beings in ritual dance. In both religions, priests went through intense training that in some nations lasted their entire lives. These priests became very politically powerful.

Art, Clothing, and Trade

A major form of art that continues to be important for the peoples of the Pacific Northwest is woodworking. The forest provides a generous supply of wood that can be carved into fine art. Artisans craft many items,



This carved box shows the woodworking skill of the Tlingit people of the Pacific Northwest.

some of which are for everyday use, such as boxes and dishes.

Trees continue to be used today to make **totem poles**, which are carved and

painted logs set upright. A totem pole might tell a story, mark an important event, or stake a claim to territory. It can include a family crest as well as animals and symbols that represent families, values, and supernatural beings.

A garment that remains important for many peoples of the Pacific Northwest today is the Chilkat robe. Although it is named for the Chilkat people, it is used by many nations. It is made of woven cedar bark thread and mountain goat wool. Designs are painted on or woven into the robe, and the bottom is decorated with long fringe. A Chilkat robe is very expensive because it can take years to make. The robes are used for ceremonial purposes.

The peoples of the Pacific Northwest traded with one another in an extensive network, using canoes to transport goods. Trade goods

Vocabulary

totem pole, n. a carved and painted log set upright



Totem poles are brightly painted. The animals depicted on them can share information about a family.



The designs on a Tlingit (Chilkat) robe have important symbolic meanings, much like the designs on a totem pole.

included oil, fur, and dried foods. People also made baskets that are still respected for their beauty today.

Because the geography of California is so varied, the many nations in that region developed very different ways of life.

For example, the Chumash people lived on the coast of Southern California, so

their culture had a great deal to do with the ocean. They built fishing boats that were highly decorated to bring them luck while catching fish. The Cahuilla people lived in the desert. They made **ollas**—large, round clay pots with small necks. The ollas could store water and dry food like grains and dried berries. They could also be used for cooking.

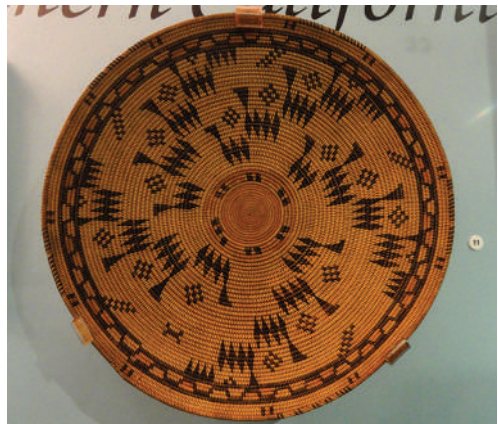
Many of the peoples of what is now California also made baskets. These were used for everyday tasks such as holding food, but they were woven with beautiful designs. The nations of the region traded extensively with each other and with peoples in other areas, selling their own goods and

buying what they could not make or gather themselves. Most of these nations used shells as a form of exchange when trading.

The clothing of these peoples varied by nation and location but had some things in common. Grass or pounded bark was woven into skirts and sandals, and deerskin garments, especially

Vocabulary

olla, n. a large, round clay pot with a small neck



Chumash basketry

loincloths, were quite common. Many nations sewed strips of rabbit fur together to make blankets for use in cold weather.

In addition, some—but not all—nations included tattoos and body piercings as part of their appearance. Many peoples also used body paint, feathers, and jewelry in their dress.

Change came to the region beginning in 1769 with the arrival of the Spanish, who forced their beliefs and culture on to the people there. They sometimes drove people from their homes. Then, in the mid-1800s, the rush to find gold in the American West forced out even more people. These events caused a lot of the knowledge and culture of these nations to be lost. However, the people of these nations today work hard to recover and preserve their culture and heritage.



The Chumash people created art on the walls of caves in what is today Southern California.

PRIMARY SOURCE: TLINGIT CARVING



Glossary

A

adobe, n. a building material made partially of sun-dried clay (42)

animism, n. the belief that objects, places, and creatures all possess a specific spiritual essence (23)

awl, n. a sharp, pointed tool used for sewing and making holes (16)

B

band, n. a group of people who work together for a goal (22)

bison, n. a large animal similar to a cow or ox (16)

busk, n. a ceremonial fasting time (10)

C

calumet, n. a pipe smoked ceremonially to signal a peace agreement (20)

canyon, n. a deep valley cut through rock by river water (40)

civil, adj. related to the government, not religious or military organizations (7)

clan, n. a group of families claiming a common ancestor (7)

cliff dweller, n. a person who lives on a rock ledge or cliff wall, such as a member of the Ancestral Pueblo people (40)

confederacy, n. a group of people, organizations, or countries that join together for a common cause (6)

counting coup, v. touching the body of an enemy warrior without killing them (26)

H

harvest, v. to gather crops at the end of the growing season (8)

hogan, n. a home made of logs or stone (48)

I

initiation rite, n. an act that a person must complete to join a group (21)

K

kiva, n. an underground structure used for everyday and ceremonial purposes (43)

L

longhouse, n. a rectangular house made of bark panels on a frame of wooden poles (32)

M

medicine wheel, n. an object or artwork that symbolizes the four directions using certain colors (25)

N

nutrition, n. the nourishment people get from food that helps them grow and stay healthy (31)

O

olla, n. a large, round clay pot with a small neck (60)

P

palisade, n. a fence made of sharpened wooden posts (6)

potlatch, n. a huge ceremony and celebration that can last days or even weeks (57)

R

ritual, n. an act or series of actions done in the same way in a certain situation, such as a religious ceremony (4)

S

sachem, n. a chief of a Northeast nation (35)

sacred, adj. holy or religiously important (25)

shaman, n. a religious leader who can talk to spirits (23)

sign language, n. a language that uses gestures instead of speech (18)

Sun Dance, n. a religious ritual that involves fasting and dancing (24)

supernatural, adj. beyond the world and laws of nature that can be seen or observed (9)

sweat lodge, n. a building where water is poured over hot rocks to make steam (23)

T

tepee, n. a home made by stretching animal skin around poles in the shape of a cone (18)

thatch, n. plant materials, such as straw, laid over each other (8)

totem pole, n. a carved and painted log set upright (59)

tribe, n. a group of people who share the same language, customs, beliefs, and leadership (17)

V

vision quest, n. a religious ritual that involves going into the wilderness to get help from a spirit guide (23)

W

wampum, n. a bead made from clamshells (37)

war bonnet, n. an article worn on the head and decorated with eagle feathers (25)

wickiup, n. a hut made from a frame of bent grass or bark-covered branches (47)

wigwam, n. a domed dwelling built by peoples of the Northeast, made of poles tied together and covered (31)

Y

yucca, n. a plant that grows in the Southwest that has tough leaves (50)



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Pair of Cherokee moccasins (beaded hide)/American School / American/Private Collection/Photo © Christie's Images / Bridgeman Images: 13a

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