

Native Americans

Introduction

Native Americans are also known as.

- Indigenous People
- American Indians
- Native Americans lived throughout North and South America. In the United States.
- The Native Americans were grouped into tribes or nations usually based on the area they lived in
- Today, some of the descendants of the original American Indians live on reservations. These are areas of land set aside specifically for Native Americans.
- The groups of Native American tribes spoke different languages. It is estimated that there were many languages spoken in around **600 different dialects.**

What Native Americans Eat?

The most important **Native American food crop** was corn, or what they called maize. Other important American Indian crops included squash, potatoes, wild rice, tomatoes, sweet potatoes, beans, pumpkins, sunflowers, peanuts, peppers, chocolate, and avocados.

Native American tribes also had diets that included a lots of meat. These meats were: elk, buffalo, caribou, rabbit, deer, salmon, fish, ducks, turkeys, geese, pheasant, shellfish and other marine animals like whales and seal. Porcupines and snakes were also hunted as food.

Native Americans also ate honey, eggs, maple syrup, nuts, salt, pine nuts, cranberries, blueberries, raspberries, acorns, root vegetables and greens. **Native American cooking** tended to be simple. Most Native Americans preferred to eat food which was fresh, without many spices.

What did Native Americans Live in?

Wigwams used poles from trees that would be bent and tied together to make a dome shaped home. The outside of the home would be covered with bark or other material that was available where the native Americans lived. The frames were not portable, like the teepee, but sometimes the coverings could be moved when the tribe moved.

Wigwams were relatively small homes that formed a circle around 15 feet wide. However, these homes still sometimes housed more than just one Native American family. It was a pretty tight squeeze, but probably helped keep them warm in the winter.



Important Facts

Some Native Americans were **nomadic** (did not live in one place, but travelled between seasons), some were **semi-nomadic**, and others were **static** (remained in the same place).

Religions and beliefs were very important to the Native American way of life. **Animism** is a commonly shared belief amongst American Indian tribes. It is based on the spiritual belief that everything, living, natural or inanimate and has a soul or spirit

The religious leader of each Native American tribe was called the shaman or medicine man.

The term "**Red Indian**" for Native Americans is outdated and inaccurate as it originally referred to a specific tribe, the **Beothuks**, who painted their bodies and faces with red paint.

According to recent **census** reports, there are about 2 million Native Americans in the United States and 1 million in Canada today.

Festivals and ceremonies were very important to Native American culture and were closely linked to religion and beliefs. It was usual to hold ceremonies and rituals to worship and pacify the spirits; the festivals and ceremonies would include chanting, singing and dancing.

Native American **totem poles** are large trees carved with figures representing faiths and beliefs. The carvings, colours and symbols on a totem pole have spiritual meanings and significance.

Today, there are over **500 recognised tribes** in the United States alone.

Music and dance were important parts of the Native American culture. Songs were sung at important religious rituals, but were also part of everyday life. They believed that music was the language of the spirits

Beliefs

The religion and spiritual beliefs of Native Americans played an important role in their everyday life. Each tribe and peoples had their own unique beliefs, legends, and rituals, but they all believed that the world was filled with spirits.

The Great Spirit

The Great Spirit was a supreme being that watched over everything including the other spirits of the world. There were different versions of the Great Spirit. Both the Sioux and the Algonquian Nations had the concept of a Great Spirit. The Blackfoot people believed in the "Old Man" who created all things and taught the Blackfoot how to gain spiritual wisdom.

Guardian Spirits

The Native Americans in the Pacific Northwest believed that all living things were watched over by guardian spirits. This included animals, trees, people, and even some inanimate objects like the wind, storms, and water.