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About the Author

Steven Greif has been named a “Distinguished Alumni” of Southwestern Oregon Community College where he earned his Associate of Arts degree. His Bachelor of Arts degree in history came from Oregon State University where he won several awards for student writing. He also studied colonial history at the College of William and Mary and obtained his Interdisciplinary Master’s degree in history and geography at the University of Oregon. For 32 years, Greif taught leadership and civics classes, Advanced Placement American history, and Pacific Northwest history at North Bend (Oregon) High School, and coached track and field as well. He was honored with the Oregon Education Association’s “Excellence in Education Award” in 1996 and was named “Citizen of the Year” in North Bend in 2005. Greif has been a volunteer member of the Coos County Historical Society Board of Directors since 1999. Since retiring in 2010, he has taught night classes at the local community college.

Lesson 1

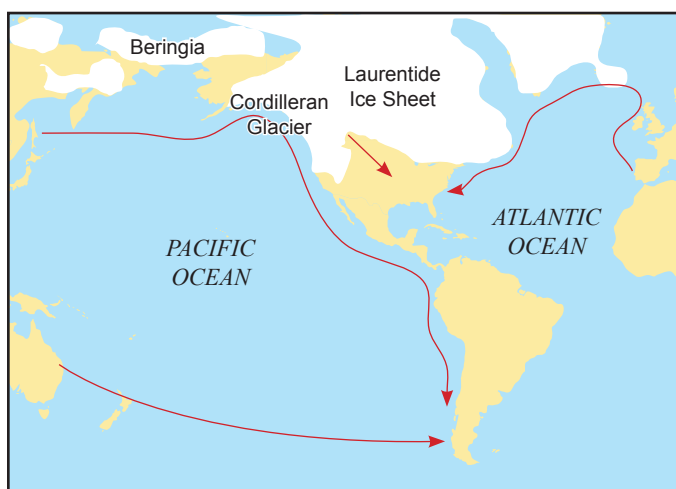
North American Peoples on the Eve of European Contact

A. First Americans

¹Historians don't know exactly how and when North America was first settled. ²Historians also debate about the density (number of inhabitants) of the native population in North America when Europeans arrived on the continent. ³Common population estimates usually range from three to ten million people. ⁴One of the first European explorers, Christopher Columbus, was looking for a sea route to the Spice Islands in the Indies off of Southeast Asia. ⁵When he landed on the Caribbean Islands in 1492, Columbus mistakenly labeled the native peoples he encountered "Indians." ⁶The native peoples did not have a system of writing, so most of what we know today about these early peoples is not based on written history. ⁷Instead, those who research Native Americans must piece together their history by using tribal stories and traditions, language patterns, genetic evidence, and archaeological evidence (physical artifacts).

B. Migration Theories

⁸Most historians today suggest that ancestors of Native Americans arrived in North America during the last ice age (about 33,000 to 13,000 years ago). ⁹Several different theories have been put forth about their migration path. ¹⁰Most scientific findings point to the arrival of the first humans in North America traveling from northeastern Asia across a land bridge called "Beringia" that existed between Siberia and Alaska. ¹¹As Earth warmed



→ Possible Migration Routes of Native Americans

and these ice age glaciers retreated, the ancestors of Native Americans traveled by two main land routes south and settled in different areas throughout the hemisphere.

¹²Two smaller groups of researchers believe in different migration theories. ¹³One group of scientists suggests that people from Southeast Asia, Australia, and islands in the East Pacific may have sailed east across the ocean to settle in South America. ¹⁴Yet another group of historians say that people from southern Europe, a group called the Solutreans who lived in an area of today's southern Spain, France, and Portugal sailed west across the Atlantic Ocean at the edge of an ice cap during the end of the last ice age.

¹⁵However native peoples migrated, this much is clear. ¹⁶Over thousands of years small, widely scattered groups of people settled in diverse (different) areas throughout North America. ¹⁷The geography of the regions they settled dictated unique ways to create shelters, produce food, dress, and worship. ¹⁸Rich and diverse cultures developed. ¹⁹The Native Americans often interacted with each other through trade and travel and created a way of life that had much in common, despite their differences.

²⁰Many Native Americans believe their ancestors originated in the Americas. ²¹Most tribes have creation stories that tell of their tribal beginnings. ²²Some historians say these creation stories may well reflect the experiences of native ancestors as they journeyed from Asia, across water, ice, and unknown lands, encountering new animals they had never seen before.

C. Northeast Tribes

²³By the time of the arrival of Europeans around 1500, there were several distinct regions of Native American culture in North America. ²⁴One of those regions was the home of the Northeast tribes. ²⁵They lived along the Atlantic shore, into the Great Lakes region, and in the forests of the Appalachian Mountains. ²⁶Tribes in this area were mainly hunters and gatherers. ²⁷They built permanent longhouses made of bark attached to wooden pole frames. ²⁸Often described as fierce fighters, tribes in this region often fought one another. ²⁹By the time of the arrival of the first English colonists in the early 1600s, Native Americans had formed an organization called the Iroquois League to help keep peace among the warring tribes.

D. Southeast and Plains Tribes

³⁰In the Southeast, tribes relied heavily on farming for much of their food. ³¹They grew maize (corn), beans, and tobacco but also supplemented their diet by fishing and hunting. ³²Their climate was milder so their homes were simple log frames with a roof covered in leaves or grasses. ³³Plains Tribes who lived in the middle of the continent depended on buffalo for tools, meat, and clothing. ³⁴Buffalo skins also covered their teepees (tent-like housing). ³⁵Plains tribes were nomadic, moving from season to season, hunting buffalo on foot. ³⁶After Spaniards brought horses to the Americas in the 1500s, many tribes migrated to the plains and thrived on the grasslands there. ³⁷Plains tribesmen quickly adapted the horse to their culture.

Native American Regions in North America



E. Southwestern and Basin Tribes

³⁸Between the Sierra Nevada Mountains of California and the Rocky Mountains was a region where the Great Basin tribes lived. ³⁹Much of the area was desert and not suitable for farming. ⁴⁰Simple tools like bows and arrows, stone knives, digging sticks, and fishing nets allowed these tribes to move about as they hunted and gathered food. ⁴¹The Southwestern Region has a dry, hot climate. ⁴²Natives here were often called Pueblos because they built permanent villages (“pueblo” is the Spanish word for town). ⁴³Their homes were made out of thick adobe (sun-dried bricks made of clay and straw) to keep out summer heat and winter cold. ⁴⁴Some pueblos were three or four stories high and built under the overhangs of cliffs.

F. Northwest Coast Tribes

⁴⁵The Northwest Coast tribes relied heavily on salmon, shellfish, berries, and camas root to provide their foods. ⁴⁶Tribes were made up of villages built along the ocean shore or the edge of a bay or river. ⁴⁷Native homes along the coast were planked (long, flat timbers) longhouses. ⁴⁸They also used local forests to gather materials for woven mats, baskets, canoes, and other wood products. ⁴⁹Inland from the coast, east of the Cascade Mountains, were the Plateau tribes. ⁵⁰Like the Great Basin and Plains tribe, Plateau tribes were nomadic, moving with the seasons. ⁵¹Annual salmon runs up the Columbia River into the interior plateau region provided a major source of food. ⁵²Plateau tribes traded widely with the Northwest Coast tribes and the Plains tribes.



Mesa Verde in Colorado is an example of Pueblo architecture.

Fun Fact Feature

Massachusetts, Indiana, Ohio, Kansas, Illinois, Arkansas, North Dakota, Utah ... these are some modern-day names of states in the United States. What do these names have in common?

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1. When European explorers came to North America around 1500, how many Native Americans were probably living on the continent?
 - a. only a few thousand
 - b. 1 million
 - c. 3 to 10 million
 - d. about 45 million

Which sentence best supports the answer?

2. Explain why the name “Indians” is really a mistaken label given the natives by Christopher Columbus.

3. Many Native American tribes believe this about their existence in North America:
 - a. creation stories show their ancestors originated here.
 - b. Solutreans from southern Spain, France, and Portugal became the first Americans.
 - c. Native peoples migrated from northeastern Asia during the ice age.
 - d. Australians and southeastern Asians sailed east across the Pacific Ocean.

Which sentences best support the answer?

4. “Beringia” is the name given to:
 - a. the first Native Americans.
 - b. the ancestral language group of Native Americans.
 - c. the people who may have sailed across the Atlantic Ocean from southern Spain.
 - d. the land bridge between North East Asia and Alaska during the most recent ice age.

Which sentence best supports the answer?

5. Historians have been able to piece together Native American history mainly because of the vast amount of written records kept by Native Americans over the centuries.

Is this statement true or false? _____

Which sentence best supports the answer?

6. Name two Native American regions in North America where the natives used “longhouses.”
 - a. _____
 - b. _____

7. Which theory of Native American migration is most popular among scientists today?
 - a. Solutrean ocean crossing
 - b. Beringia migration
 - c. Native American creation stories
 - d. Australian, South East Asian, Pacific Island Ocean crossing

Which sentence best supports the answer?

8. In which region of North America were the natives often referred to as “Pueblos” as a result of the housing structures they created?
 - a. Northwest Coast
 - b. Southwest Region
 - c. Plains Region
 - d. Southeast Region

Which sentences best support the answer?

9. In which region of North America was the Iroquois League located?
 - a. Northwest Coast
 - b. Southwest Region
 - c. Plains Region
 - d. Northeast Region

Which sentence best supports the answer?
