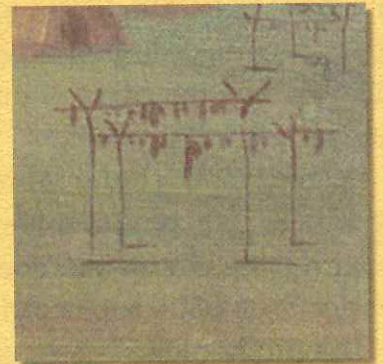




How do you think the environment affected the clothes these people wore?



How do you think the environment affected the homes these people lived in?



How do you think the environment affected the food these people ate?



# American Indian Cultural Regions

## 3

*How and why did American Indian cultural regions differ?*

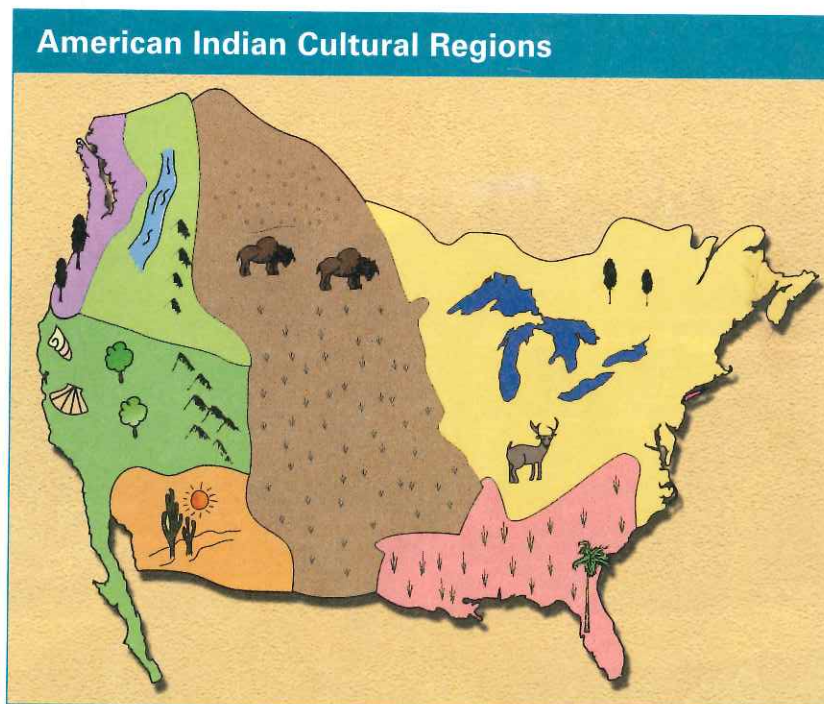
### 3.1 Introduction

In Chapter 2, you read about the first people to settle the American continents. You also learned how the Inuits adapted to their environment. In this chapter, you will see how other American Indian groups adapted to their surroundings.

By the 1400s, American Indians had a variety of **cultures**, or ways of living. Many groups lived in villages. Other groups were **nomadic**. This means they moved from place to place as changes in seasons made food available in different areas. Historians call the areas where similar cultures developed **cultural regions**. There are different ways of describing them, but one way is to divide them into seven regions. They are the Northwest Coast, California-Intermountain, Southwest, Plateau, Great Plains, Eastern Woodlands, and Southeast regions.

Historians determined these regions by looking at the **artifacts** they found. Artifacts are human-made objects that help us understand how the people who made them lived. Each American Indian group made clothes, tools, and other things they needed. They used nearby natural resources. For example, American Indians living near the forests of the Northwest Coast made wooden boxes for food storage. Hopis, in the Southwest where there are few trees, kept food in pots made of local clay.

This map shows the seven major American Indian cultural regions. As you read, use the map to help you note facts about how each group lived. What was the environment like in each region? How did these environments affect American Indian cultures?





### 3.2 American Indians of the Northwest Coast

The Northwest Coast American Indians lived on a narrow strip of land along the Pacific Coast. This region was south of the Inuits' ice fields. It stretched from present-day Alaska to California. Dense fir, pine, and cedar forests grew right to the ocean's shore. This forced many people to settle on the few flat, rocky beaches. The climate here is mild, but the area receives heavy rainfall most of the year. Many tribes, including the Tlingits, Chinooks, and Kwakiutls (kwah-kee-YOO-tels), adapted to life here.

There was plentiful wildlife in the area. Fish, especially salmon, filled the streams. Migrating whales swam up and down the coast. Deer, elk, mountain goats, bears, and wolves lived in the forests.

The Kwakiutls used wood from the forest for housing. They built huge wooden structures that served as homes for several families. Outside each home they placed totem poles. On these cedar poles, the Kwakiutls carved figures of animals, humans, and spirits. These carvings told about important events in the family's history and indicated the family's social position.

Clothes made from cedar bark protected Kwakiutls from the wet climate. Women wove the bark's soft inner core into warm, waterproof coats and hats.

Kwakiutls also used cedar bark to make rope. They used this rope for fishing nets and to hold together fish traps made from willow trees. They shaped each trap like a cone. Salmon swam into the cone and could not escape.

In the Northwest Coast cultural region, American Indians settled on rocky beaches bordered by thick forests.







### 3.3 American Indians of the California-Intermountain Region

The California-Intermountain cultural region ran inland from the Pacific coast of California. It contains the Sierra Nevada, a high mountain range, and reaches into the Great Basin. This region has many kinds of environments. For example, the Great Basin is a desert. It has extreme heat and cold and limited rainfall, so few plants and animals live there. American Indians in this area were nomadic, moving on after using up available food, such as rabbits, ants, and berries. Many tribes, including the Shoshones and the Paiutes, made this region their home.

Unlike the Great Basin, California has different landscapes and a milder climate that provides rich resources. In the 1400s, huge redwood trees covered the coastal mountains. Oak trees, grasses, and berries grew inland. There were many deer, rabbits, and birds. Streams were filled with fish. Clams and other shellfish were found along the seashore. Among the tribes who lived here were the Miwoks and the Pomos (PO-mos).

The California Pomos lived along the California coast and also a short way inland. Coastal Pomos used nearby trees, such as redwoods, to build their homes. They piled thick pieces of bark against a center pole. These homes looked like upside-down ice-cream cones.

The Pomos made beads from the sea's resources. They used them as money. Artisans made the beads from clamshells. They broke the shells into pieces that they shaped into beads. They strung the beads on cords that looked like necklaces.

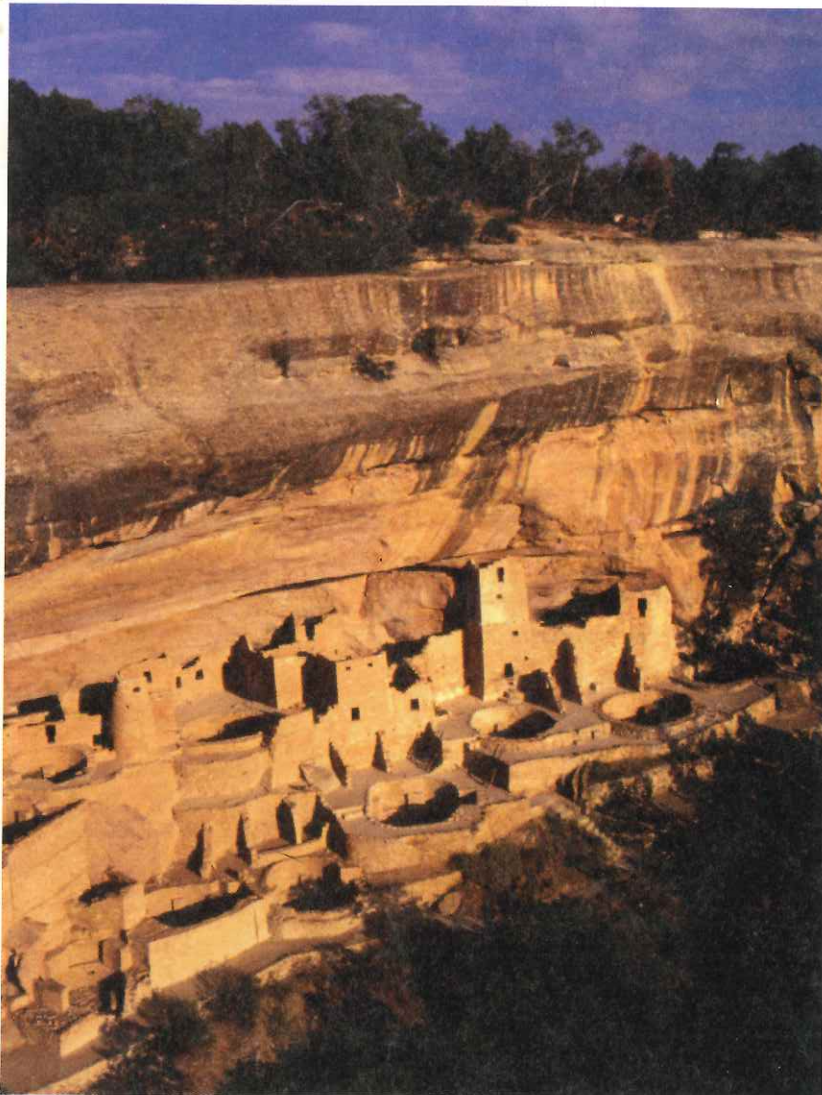
Pomos used natural materials to make useful and artistic things. For example, to hold food, they wove beautiful baskets from roots, grasses, reeds, bark, and small willow branches. They decorated the baskets with shells, beads, and feathers.

The ocean provided many resources for American Indians living in the California-Intermountain region.



**mesa** a flat-topped hill with steep sides

The Anasazis built cliff dwellings against and inside cliff walls. These are remains of such homes in Mesa Verde National Park in Colorado.



### 3.4 American Indians of the Southwest

The driest cultural region was the Southwest. It stretched from the southwestern United States to northern Mexico. In this region, there are mountains, **mesas**, canyons, and deserts. These places receive little rainfall, and they often have extreme temperatures. Days are hot. Nights are cold. There are long, hot summers and short, mild winters. This climate supports few trees or plants.

Some of the American Indians who lived here, like the Apaches, were nomadic. Others, like the Hopis, lived in villages and learned to farm with little water. They raised crops like corn, beans, squash, and cotton.

The geography affected how people lived. The Anasazis, believed to be ancestors of the Hopis, lived in this region more than 2,000 years ago. At first, they made houses of stone and adobe, a type of clay that hardens like cement. Later, they built similar homes against and inside cliff walls. These were called cliff dwellings. Because there were few trees, their descendants, the Hopis, also made homes of stone and adobe. They built apartment buildings called *pueblos*. These pueblos were up to four or five levels high. People moved from one story to another by ladder.

Hopi women wore cotton cloth to stay cool in the summer heat. They used plants to make dyes in colors such as orange, yellow, red, green, and black. The men wove the cloth for blankets and clothing. The Hopis also embroidered designs on their clothes.

The Hopis created clay pots in which they cooked, served, and stored their food. They decorated these pots with black geometric designs and images of living creatures.





### 3.5 American Indians of the Plateau

The Plateau cultural region lay between the Cascade and the Rocky mountains. This region included parts of what is now the northwestern states and British Columbia. It has flatlands, rolling hills, and **gorges**. Summers are hot and winters are very cold. As in the Southwest, rainfall is light. However, the Plateau region gets water from the large Columbia and Fraser rivers. These rivers are fed by rainfall in the mountains. Many tribes, such as the Nez Percés (NEHZ-pers-es), Spokanes, and Yakimas, now called Yakamas (YA-kuh-muhs), lived here.

Various types of plants and animals survived on the plateau. Forests grew near the mountains. Other areas had only thick grasses, berries, or camas, a type of lily. The camas root was an important food source for people on the Plateau because few animals lived there. Some deer and bear roamed the forests. Jackrabbits lived in drier sections. The rivers held fish.

Yakima artifacts show the culture that developed as people adapted to the harsh climate and available resources. For instance, the Yakimas built their winter homes partly underground to escape from the cold. Each home was a three-foot-deep, circular hole with a grass-mat roof. To help keep heat inside, the Yakimas covered the mat with earth.

The Yakima women wove local grasses into clothing, such as basket hats. These hats were cone-shaped but flat on top. The women decorated them with designs.

To harvest foods such as camas and other roots, the Yakimas developed a digging stick. They used a hardwood stick that was curved and pointed at one end. They attached a short handle of animal horn to the other end. The women pushed a digging stick under a root and then lifted it out of the ground.

Large rivers provided water and salmon for American Indians in the Plateau region.

**gorge** a narrow, deep valley with steep sides





In the 1500s, the Sioux began to use horses to move their camps and to hunt buffalo.

### 3.6 American Indians of the Great Plains

East of the Plateau lay the Great Plains. This region extended from the Rocky Mountains to the Mississippi River Valley. From north to south, it stretched from Canada to Texas. Among the many tribes who lived here were the Cheyennes (shy-ANS), Pawnees, Comanches (koh-MAN-chees), and Sioux (soo).

The Great Plains region has cold winters and hot summers. In the 1400s, it was mostly treeless grassland. Many animals lived there, including pronghorn antelope, deer, and bear. To American Indians, the most important creature on the plains was the buffalo.

The Western Sioux considered the buffalo sacred because it was so valuable to them. They used parts of this animal to make many things they needed to survive. For example, the Sioux made their homes, called tepees, from buffalo hides, or skins. To build a tepee, women sewed the hides together. Then they constructed a cone out of long poles and covered the cone with the hides. On the outside of the tepee, men painted scenes from daily life.

In addition, the Sioux used buffalo hides to make warm blankets to wear in winter. They decorated the flesh side of the hides and placed the fur side next to their skin. In Chapter 2, you learned how they also recorded important events by painting winter counts on hides.

Warriors even made shields from buffalo hides. Men painted their shields with scenes from their dreams. They believed these images came from heaven and protected them from harm. They also decorated their shields with fur and feathers.

## of the Eastern Woodlands

atched east from the Mississippi  
It ran south from the Great Lakes  
n Indians settled among its hills  
asts. Most tribes spoke either  
Algonquian (al-GOHN-kwee-in).  
Mohawks and the Senecas. The  
s were two Algonquin (al-GOHN-  
poke Algonquian.  
, including cold winters and hot  
fill streams and rivers. In the 1400s,  
grew in woodland forests. These  
as turkey, deer, and beaver.  
region's forests to build their  
nter wigwams were larger than  
re used for years. For a summer  
l trees into a dome-shaped frame  
n women covered this frame with  
m plants.  
mal skins, such as deer hides,  
oes also wore capes made of wild  
m warm and dry. They made these  
ng feathers.  
t, light canoes from several types of  
r frame. Then they covered it with  
the bark together with spruce roots.  
ld the boat's sides together. A man  
oe from one stream to another.

In the Eastern Woodlands, dense forests of birch, oak, and maple trees protected deer, beaver, and other wildlife.







Razor-sharp saw grass and palmetto trees grew in the Everglades swamplands of the Southeast.

### 3.8 American Indians of the Southeast

The Southeast cultural region reached south from the Ohio Valley to the Gulf of Mexico. It ran east from Texas to the Atlantic Ocean. This territory includes river valleys, mountains, coastal plains, and swamps. In both dry and wet areas, weather is usually hot. Many tribes, such as the Creeks and the Choctaws, lived in the Southeast cultural region. In the 1700s, the Seminoles (SEH-meh-nols) came to live in the Everglades swamplands of southern Florida.

These swamps are very hot and steamy. Shallow streams crisscross the land. Tall, razor-sharp saw grass rises from the waters. Giant ferns, cypress, and palmetto trees grow in the humid jungle. Deer roam the forests. Fish, alligators, and snakes lurk in the swampy waters.

Several American Indian groups, mostly Creeks, lived in what are now Georgia and Alabama. Members of these tribes moved south into Florida in the 1700s. This area was under Spanish rule. Over time, people from other tribes arrived. This group became the Seminoles. In the 1800s, escaped slaves from the United States also joined this tribe.

The Seminoles had a culture suited to swamplands. They built their homes, called chickees, on wooden platforms three feet above the ground. This protected the houses from the swampy ground. Wooden posts supported a slanted roof made of palm tree leaves. To allow breezes to blow through, the chickee had no walls. This was a good design for the hot climate.



The swamp environment sometimes forced Seminoles to wear clothing that was unusual for a warm climate. For example, to protect their legs from sharp saw grass and mosquitoes, Seminoles wore leggings. They made the leggings out of deer hides.

To move along the shallow streams, the Seminoles made flat-bottomed dugout canoes. They built each canoe from a tree log. They hollowed it out with stone and bone scrapers.

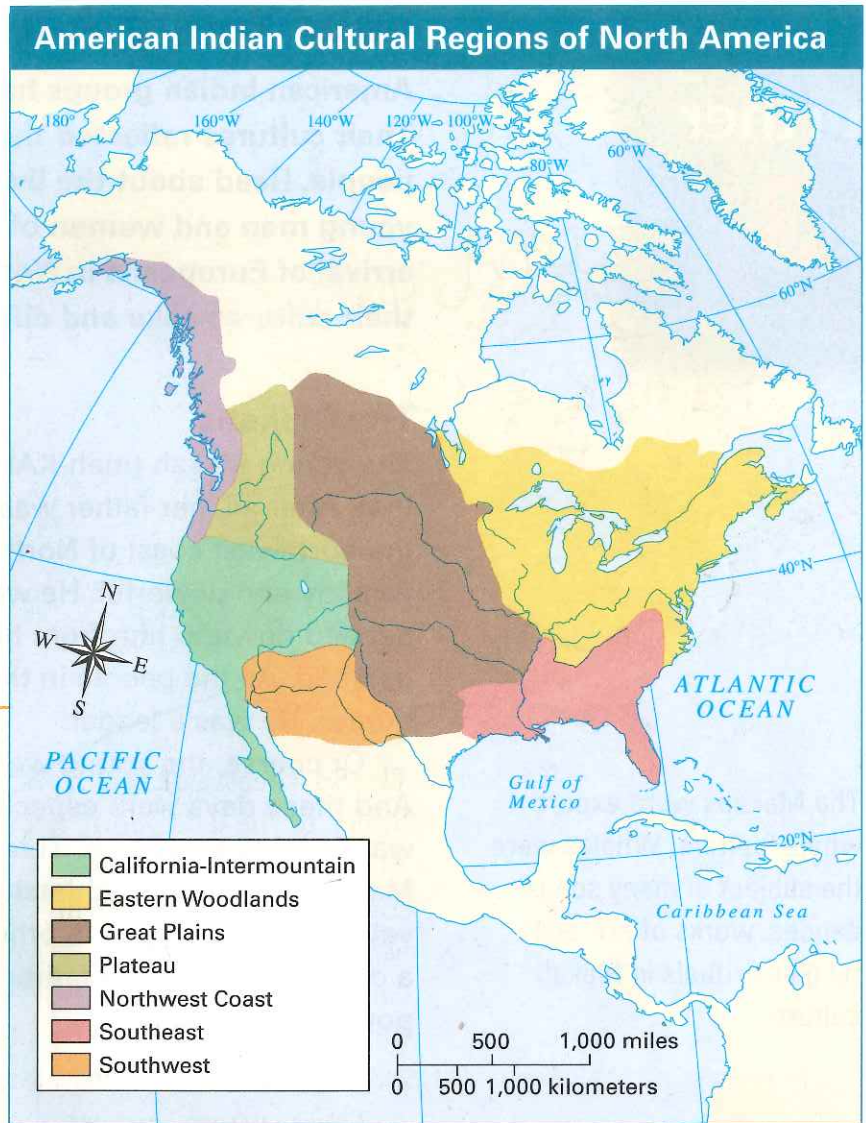
### Summary

In this chapter, you read about how many American Indians lived. You used a map to find the seven American Indian cultural regions. You learned how the environment of each region affected the cultures that developed there.

American Indians in each area used nearby natural resources. With these, they made their homes, clothing, tools, and art. In the forested Northwest, the Kwakiutls built wooden homes. In the dry Southwest, the Hopis made homes of clay.

Each group adapted to its environment. In the cold Plateau winters, the Yakimas built their homes partly underground. In the hot and humid Southeast, the Seminoles built houses without walls.

You will now meet four young American Indians. Each one lives in a different cultural region. And each one belongs to a tribe with its own way of life. Find out how these young people spend their time.





# Reading Further 3

## Four Young American Indians

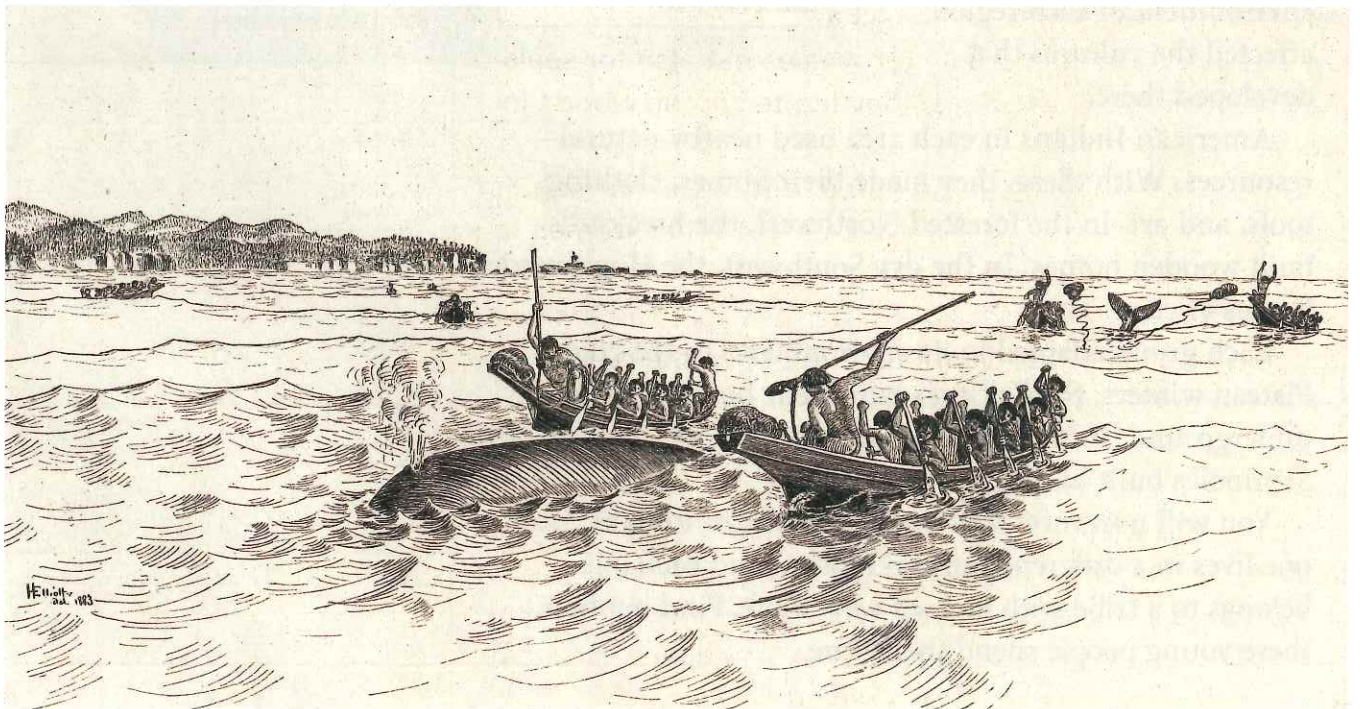
American Indian groups had different ways of living. Their cultures reflected the land and the history of their people. Read about the lives and thoughts of these four young men and women of the late 1400s, before the arrival of Europeans in North America. In what ways were their cultures alike and different?

### The Makahs

The young Makah (mah-KAH) girl was fortunate. She knew that. After all, her father was a headman in her village on the northwest coast of North America. This meant he was wealthy and powerful. He was a whale hunter. This job was handed down to him from his father. It required skill and courage. All the people in the village looked up to the whale hunter. He was a leader.

Of course, the young woman had her own work to do. And these days were especially busy. For soon, her father was hosting a potlatch. This was a special ceremony for the Makah people. At a potlatch, the host gave many of his most valuable possessions to others. The upcoming potlatch was a chance for the girl's father to demonstrate his wealth and power in the village.

The Makahs were expert whale hunters. Whales were the subject of many songs, dances, works of art, and religious rituals in Makah culture.



New Bedford Whaling Museum, New Bedford, Massachusetts



The girl's family had been preparing for the potlatch for many months. After all, they had to collect fancy gifts for each guest. Such gifts might include baskets, woven blankets, or decorated pieces of copper. The Makahs made a variety of useful and beautiful things from the parts of whales and other animals they caught.

Another Makah talent was wood carving. They made their whale-hunting canoes by hollowing out long trees. They also made totem poles and other carvings. Some potlatch guests might receive a skillfully carved object as a gift.

There was more to a potlatch than giving gifts. The event also featured a great feast. Most of the food for the potlatch had already been prepared. And there was a lot of food. The girl's Makah village was located between a river and an ocean in the area that we now call the Northwest Coast. There were always plenty of good things to eat. The men hunted not only for whales but also for seals. They caught fish. Sometimes, they hunted in the woods for deer and bear.

The Makah women also gathered food. This morning, for example, the girl was going out with some other women to collect shellfish and good plants to eat.

They had to work quickly. For later, the seal hunters were supposed to return from a hunting trip. Then the girl would help the other women cut up the men's catch and bring it back to the village. This would take a long time and would also make quite a mess. The Makahs did not let anything go to waste. All parts of the seal were used for meat, tools, and clothing. For example, the Makahs made inflatable floats out of seal skins. They used these floats during the whale hunt.

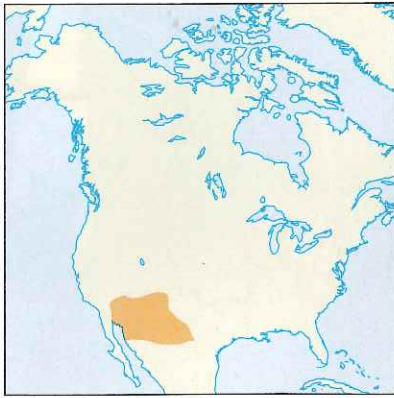
"Well," the girl said to herself with a sigh, "I had better start my chores. Today will be a long day."



The Makahs made beautiful carvings. The carvings often told a story from Makah folklore. These stories were passed down within families.







## The Taos

The Taos boy was excited. After months of training, he was ready. Soon, he would be made a full member of his people's religion. His father had told him this important step usually took place as a boy neared age 10. He would reach this age next month.

The Taos lived in a mountainous area of what is today New Mexico. They practiced their religion in special meeting rooms called kivas. These were built near the multi-level pueblos in which the people lived. The Taos gathered in a kiva to take part in secret religious ceremonies.

To become a full member of the Taos religion was a great honor. Only members could hope to sit on the council that governed the tribe. But this honor was given only to boys. And not every boy was chosen.

The boy was impatient to begin the upcoming ceremony. This would take place at a sacred lake high in the mountains. The Taos believed that their people were created from these waters. So, it was forbidden to take fish from this lake.

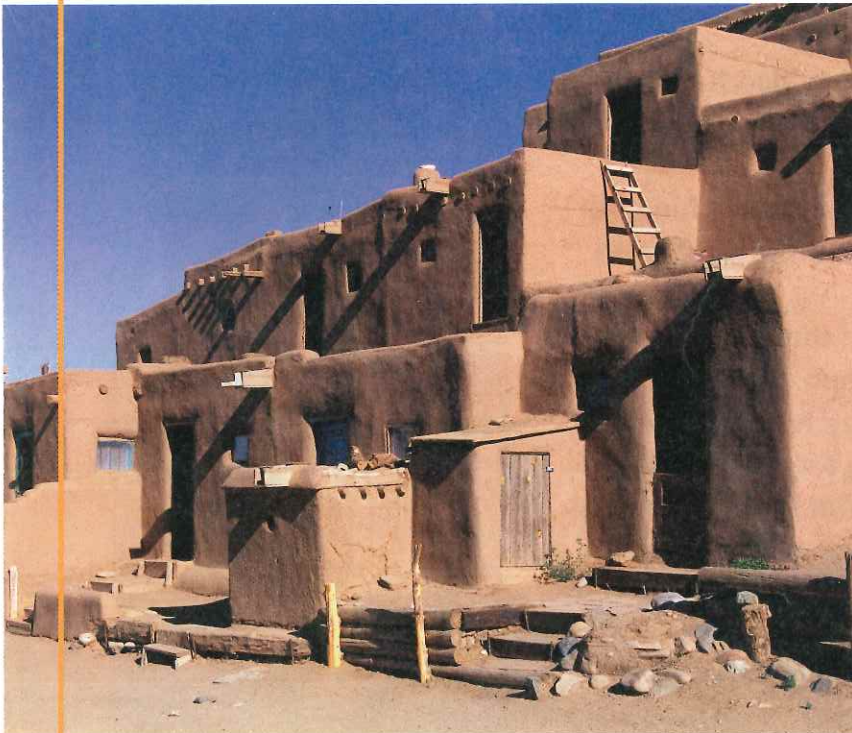
However, the men could fish in other waters near the Taos pueblo. Fish, such as trout, were part of the Taos diet. The men hunted wild animals and the women gathered food. This was a major activity. The Taos also farmed. But unlike many other American Indian people of the Southwest,

they did not grow cotton near their pueblo. And they did not keep sheep. They relied on neighboring groups in the Southwest to provide them with woven blankets of cotton and wool.

The Taos were skilled at making leather from animal hides. They used the leather to make clothing, drums, and other items. They also kept birds, including eagles. Feathers from these and other birds were highly prized.

Hunting, farming, or making leather would likely be this boy's job when he got older. For now, though, all he could think of was the upcoming religious ceremony. Then he would take his place as an adult—and, perhaps, a future leader of his people.

The Taos lived in multi-level pueblos like these. They used ladders to get from one level to the other.





## The lowas

Finally, it was warm again. The young lowa woman loved this time of year best.

She had spent the long winter traveling over the plains that stretched thousands of miles across the middle part of North America. In the cold weather, plants did not grow. So her people followed the roaming buffalo herds. The lowas relied on the buffalo for food and other necessary materials. Buffalo provided leather for clothing, bones and horns for tools, and hair for ropes.

But now the season for planting had begun. The lowa woman had returned to her people's camp near a river in what is today the state of Iowa. For a few months, she and her family would put away their tepees. These were the portable homes they used when they followed the buffalo. Here, in camp, the lowas lived in large dome-shaped lodges. These would be their homes until the fall. Then they would break camp once again.

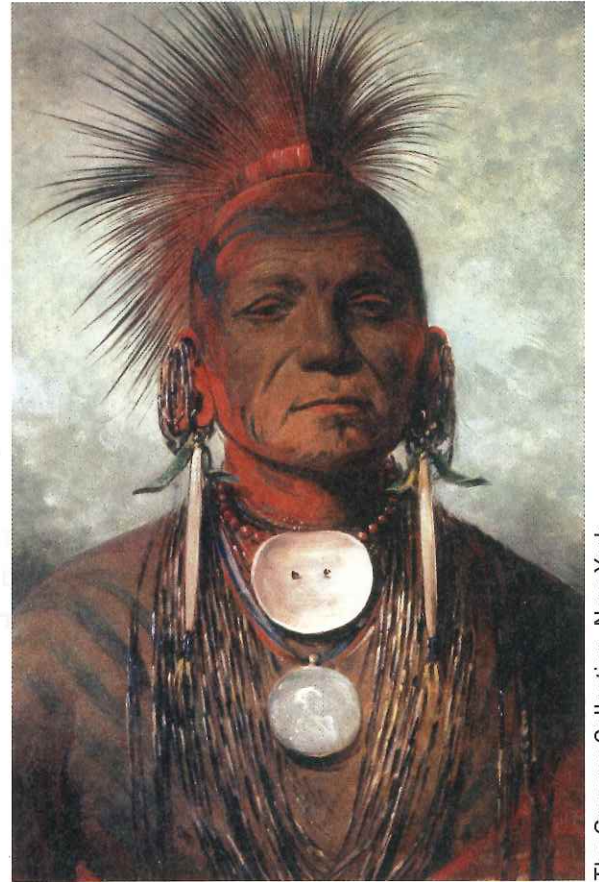
Life in the camp brought a welcome change. For one thing, the women had different jobs. In the winter, they spent much of their time breaking or setting up camp. In the growing season, they worked at planting and tending crops.

Also, camp life meant more friends and neighbors. All the lowa families gathered in camp during the warm months. The men formed large hunting parties. It took many men working together to safely hunt the huge herds of buffalo that gathered in the warm weather. When the weather turned cool, the herds scattered. It was then that the tribe separated into smaller groups. These groups headed in different directions, following the animals.

The lowa women also had to work as a team in camp. The big hunts meant large numbers of buffalo to butcher and process. Women performed this task.

Camp life was not perfect. This year, the lowas had a new tribal leader. The most powerful men among the lowas took turns filling this role. The young woman had heard some grumbling about their new leader.

For now, though, she did not care. She was happy to be back in camp. She was looking forward to the summer.



The Granger Collection, New York

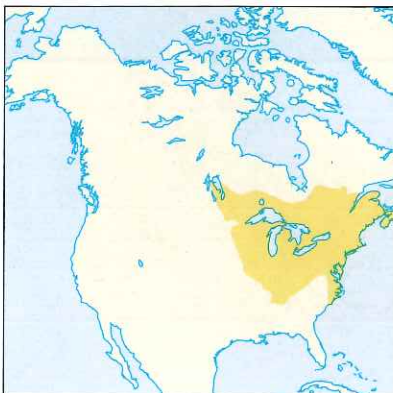
This lowa man has traditional ornaments and tattoos.







The Senecas, like other Iroquois tribes, lived in longhouses. Each house could hold several families. They built these homes out of small trees. Then they covered the houses with bark. The Iroquois called themselves “people of the longhouse.”



## The Senecas

These were anxious but exciting days for the young Seneca man of the Eastern Woodlands. He and the rest of his people lived in what is today New York state. He was the son of a great and beloved man among his people. His father’s acts of strength and courage had won him fame as a warrior. These achievements had earned his father the title of war chief in his village. He had brought great honor to his family.

But now it was time for the young man to build his own reputation. He had heard that the Senecas might soon be going to war. Like other Seneca boys, he had been training for this moment since he was very young. He had learned how to use a war club and a bow and arrow. He knew how to behave on the battlefield. He had survived months of living nearly alone in the forest—part of his training to become a man. This war could be the chance that he had been preparing for.

The young man understood what was at stake. His father’s position as war chief would not be automatically passed down to him. He would have to earn it. The Senecas did have chiefs who inherited their power. These men were called sachems. But they inherited their positions from their mothers. His mother had not passed such power on to him.

Indeed, the Seneca women held great power. They named the sachems. They ruled village life. It was the women who grew the crops that helped feed the village of several hundred people.



The Seneca men ruled in other ways. They were expert hunters. They spent many months of the year away from the village on hunting trips. And Seneca men were fierce warriors. They took pride in their fighting skills. People throughout the Eastern Woodlands feared them.

In the recent past, the Senecas had often fought with their neighbors. There had been terrible bloodshed, and many had died. Then, five of the tribes had gathered to end the wars. In addition to the Senecas, these tribes were the Mohawks, the Cayugas (KAY-yoo-guhs), the Onandagas, and the Oneidas. Together, they formed a **government** called the League of the Iroquois. An Iroquois legend tells of the forming of this great league by two men named Hiawatha and Dekanahwida.

The Iroquois were proud of their government. Each tribe had representatives at the great council and its own special role. All the members of the league had to agree on major decisions. And, best of all, members agreed not to fight among themselves. For this reason, the people called the league the Great Peace. They also called it the Long House. This referred to the type of large houses in which families live together.

But today, peace was not on the mind of the young Seneca man. Today, he was thinking of glory on the battlefield. He was thinking of the chance to gain power and honor among his people.

**government** the organization that makes the laws in a country, state, or community and has the power to enforce them

The Iroquois wove designs into wampum belts as public records. They made the belts with beads of polished shells called wampum. This belt design represents the five tribes of the League of the Iroquois.

