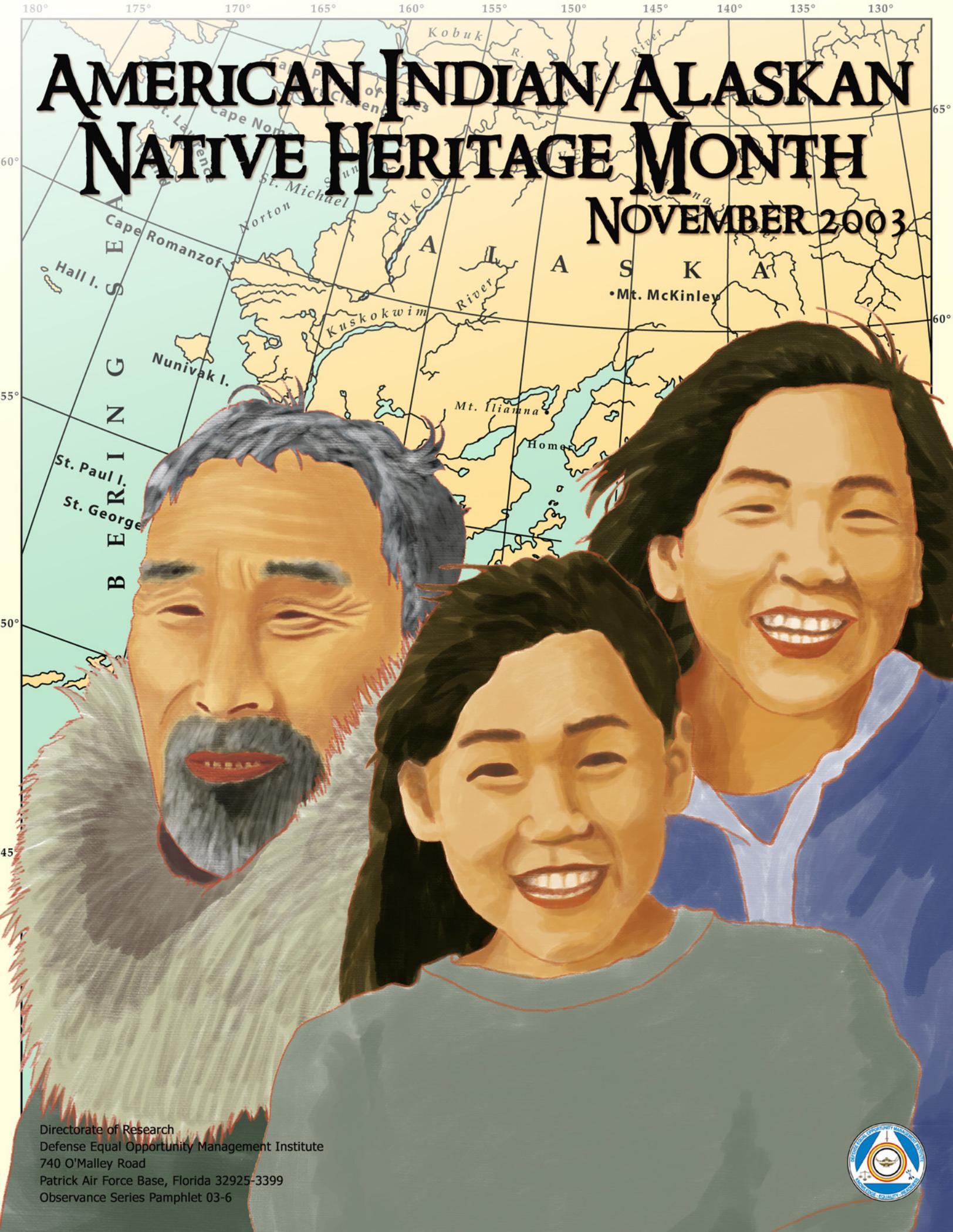


# AMERICAN INDIAN/ALASKAN NATIVE HERITAGE MONTH

NOVEMBER 2003



Directorate of Research  
Defense Equal Opportunity Management Institute  
740 O'Malley Road  
Patrick Air Force Base, Florida 32925-3399  
Observance Series Pamphlet 03-6



## **Preface**

Senior Chief Musician Steven D. Barzal, Unit Leader and Audition Supervisor, U.S. Naval Academy, Annapolis, Maryland, served as a participant in the Topical Research Intern Program at the Defense Equal Opportunity Management Institute (DEOMI) from June 23 to July 22, 2003. He conducted the necessary research to prepare this report. The Institute thanks Senior Chief Barzal for his contributions to the research efforts of DEOMI.

## **Scope**

The Topical Research Intern Program provides the opportunity for Service members and civilians of the Department of Defense (DoD) and U.S. Coast Guard to work on a diversity/equal opportunity project while on a 30-day tour of duty at the Institute. During their tour, the interns use a variety of primary and secondary source materials to compile research pertaining to an issue of importance to equal opportunity (EO) and equal employment opportunity (EEO) personnel, supervisors, and other leaders throughout the Services. The resulting publications (such as this one) are intended as resource and educational materials and do not represent official policy statements or endorsements by the DoD, U.S. Coast Guard or any of their agencies. The publications are distributed to EO/EEO personnel and senior officials to aid them in their duties. To reach the widest audience possible, the publications are posted on the Internet at: <https://www.patrick.af.mil/deomi/deomi.htm>.

**The opinions expressed in this report are those of the author and should not be construed to represent the official position of DEOMI, the military Services, Department of Defense, or U.S. Coast Guard.**

Cover design by Mr. Pete Hemmer, Ki Corporation, contractor with the Defense Equal Opportunity Management Institute.

**LOCAL REPRODUCTION IS AUTHORIZED AND ENCOURAGED**

## Table of Contents

Introduction	1
Who is an American Indian or Alaskan Native?	2
Origins of the Native Peoples	3
Early Humans in the Americas	3
Consider the American Indian View	5
Indians of the Northwest Coast	6
Totem Poles	8
The Aleuts	9
The Eskimos	10
Adaptation to the Environment	11
The Hunter and the Hunted	12
Inherent Differences	13
Alaskan Settlement	17
Alaskan Native Brotherhood	18
Alaskan Native Claims Settlement Act	18
Conclusion	18
References	19
Appendix A In Memoriam: Lori Ann Piestewa	A
Appendix B Frequently Asked Questions	B

## Introduction

There was a time when our people covered the whole land as waves of the wind-ruffled sea cover its shell-paved floor. But that time has long since passed away with the greatness of the tribes now forgotten. I will not mourn over our untimely decay, nor reproach my paleface brothers with hastening it. Chief Seattle of Duwamish tribe, 1855 (Maxwell, ed., 1996)

This quote from Chief Seattle conjures up the image of the North American continent as it was populated at the time of Columbus' arrival. Much has changed for Native Americans since their world was forever transformed by the introduction of a culture alien to their own. This paper will take the reader back to the origins of the native peoples prior to the introduction of European civilization to provide an understanding of the traditions and culture that continue to this day, followed by a discussion of not only how the American Indian and Alaskan Native population has survived the ensuing 500 years, but has also managed to experience a rebirth in the pride of their culture. In the introduction to his book, *Native Americans of the Pacific Northwest*, author David M. Buerge writes:

For 500 generations they flourished until newcomers came...much was lost; much was devalued, but much was also hidden away in the hearts of the dispossessed... Their voices insist upon a hearing and the cumulative wisdom of their long residence in this land offers rich insights to those willing to listen. The challenge now is to find a way to make knowledge of the ancient traditions, the experience of change and the living reality accessible and available...

[\(http://content.lib.washington.edu/aipnw/\)](http://content.lib.washington.edu/aipnw/)

This publication will address various topics in honor of American Indian/Alaskan Native Heritage Month for 2003. Although the official terms used by the Department of Defense are American Indian and Alaskan Native, the terms Native American and American Indian are used interchangeably to provide

variation. Alaskan Native and Eskimo will also be used similarly when discussing the Eskimos. This booklet will concentrate on Alaskan Native history and culture that is often overlooked when discussing Native American issues. The enormous distance from the arctic regions to the continental United States prevents most Americans from ever coming into direct contact with Alaskan Natives. A closer look at these fascinating people will show that this region is not an icy wasteland but the home to diverse tribes with their own distinctive traditions and vibrant cultures. Actual quotes will allow the reader to experience an authentic American Indian perspective.

### Who is an American Indian or Alaskan Native?

Native Americans as a group belong to a basic race in the anthropological sense. In reality, they tend to identify more with their respective tribe than a racial entity. The Native American population has undergone a substantial increase since 1970, exhibiting a growth rate three times as large as the general population, due perhaps to the number of people claiming the Native American category on the census. This is chiefly the result of a desire to no longer conceal one's native identity, but instead, to reclaim the pride in being Native American (Hacker, 1992).

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the terms American Indian and Alaskan Native refer to descendants of any of the original inhabitants of North, Central, and South America who maintain a tribal affiliation or community attachment. Data on race was first collected in 1790, although American Indians were not counted as a separate group until the 1860 Census. Alaskan Natives have been counted since 1880, but were not classified in the American Indian racial category until 1940. In the 1940 Census, Eskimos and Aleuts were enumerated separately. The 1970 Census used separate response categories for the Eskimo and Aleut population in Alaska only. The 1980 census was the first to collect data separately for Eskimos and Aleuts in all states. In 1990, three separate response categories were used to collect data on the American Indian and Alaskan Native population. The 2000 Census used a combined response category and asked respondents to list the name of their principal tribes. Of the total population reported, 4.1 million, or 1.5 percent, claimed American Indian and Alaskan Native. This includes 2.5 million, or 0.9 percent, who reported American Indian or Alaskan Native alone and 1.6 million, or 0.6 percent, who reported American Indian/Alaskan Native as well as one or more other races (United States Census 2000).

American Indians consist of more than 550 distinct tribes that represent the fastest growing group in the nation. Nearly forty percent of all Native Americans are below the age of twenty. Economic conditions of recent years have brought some prosperity to American Indian communities, but by and large they lag behind other groups in the United States in respect to economic, social, and educational attainment levels. Income levels remain lower than other segments of society with 31 percent at the poverty level for Native Americans compared to 13 percent for others as of 1990. These statistics are exacerbated by factors such as geographical isolation and poor physical infrastructure of

many tribal lands

(<https://128.174.5.51/denix/Public/Native/Outreach/American/indian.html>).

The evolution of the census demonstrates the difficulty in categorizing such a diverse group as the native inhabitants of North America. While small in overall population, their very existence is a testimony to the enduring worth of their culture.

### Origins of the Native Peoples

The following quote by Eskimo poet Nalungiaq of the Netsilik tribe illustrates the common belief held by Native peoples:

But these are hard things to understand, difficult things to talk about, all this is about where something began, where the first people came from. It is sufficient for us to see that they are here and that we are here. Nalungiaq (Netsilik), (Taylor, 1994)

The exact origins of the native people of the New World remains a source of contention between advocates of scientific theories and the native peoples themselves. Any discussion of Native Americans must begin with their mysterious arrival in the western hemisphere. The scientific explanations offered are products of the White Man's culture while Native Americans insist that they originated in the Americas. Archeological research that offers definitive proof continues to be complicated by the environment and other climatic conditions in the region where most agree the Native Americans arrived in the New World.

Native American culture deals not only with familiar tribes throughout the continental United States, but extends from the northernmost arctic regions of North America to Tierra del Fuego at the southernmost tip of South America. The great diversity of languages, customs, and traditions of native peoples of the western hemisphere are remarkable for the common characteristics that define them as native people.

### Early Humans in the Americas

All native people of the Americas are descendants of the original inhabitants of the New World. Physically and culturally distinct from peoples with origins in Old World continents, archaeologists estimate that Native Americans began migrating from Asia at least 20,000 years ago (Kehoe, 1981). Since no archaeological evidence has been unearthed of pre-Homo sapiens in the Western Hemisphere, it is generally acknowledged that humans did not evolve in either North or South America. Therefore, it is relatively late in human evolution that man first set foot in the New World (Maxwell, 1996).

These first migrants were of the modern *Homo sapiens* variety whose forebears had likely lived in the Siberian tundra hunting animals. These small migratory bands of hunters increased in size to an estimated 50 million people ranging from the Eskimo in the arctic to the populous cities of Mexico by 1492 A.D. and the arrival of Columbus (Kehoe, 1981).

Much has been written, ranging from the scientific to the spiritual, regarding the routes taken by these early peoples. Due to the proximity of Asia and America at the Bering Strait, most scholars agree that the northwestern corner of North America is the logical point of first entry into the continent. Twenty thousand years ago the earth was in the grip of the last ice age. As glaciers moved from the poles to more temperate regions, covering entire regions with ice, the immense weight of the glaciers compressed the continental landmasses that created a corresponding rise in the level of the sea floor. The appearance of a land bridge extending 1,000 miles from north to south across an area now covered by the Bering Strait and adjoining seas known as *Beringia* is now generally accepted by the scientific community as a geographical fact (Maxwell, 1996).

This land bridge was in places as wide as the distance from the Great Lakes to Texas. The early migrants did not see it as a bridge, but as an extension of their tundra hunting grounds (Stuart, 1969). These hearty nomads made the trek to the North American continent a millennia before its existence was ever imagined by Europeans. They were merely following the big game animals that provided them with food, hides for clothing, and bones to build living structures (Woodhead, 1992). Different routes, such as arriving in boats made of skins or wood, may have been used in later migrations, but the land bridge theory is consistent with the abilities of early man (McNickle, 1975).

This land bridge was open intermittently between 25,000 and 800 B.C. (Billard, 1974). However, the same glaciers that facilitated migration across the land bridge may have impeded southern migration through Alaska. Some scholars believe that movement to the south occurred east of the Rockies through a periodically ice-free corridor (Washburn, 1975).

The migration of humans into North America is usually thought to have occurred during two periods. The first of these migrations occurred during the late Pleistocene period that brought these early hunters from Asia, then southward and eastward, and was completed by 9500 B.C. (Joseph, 1991). These first migrants spread south and west to Kodiak Island and the Pacific Northwest coastal region. As they moved inland they became the Athabaskan speakers who survive to this day. Later, some of these Athabaskans moved southward and became the Navajos and Apaches (Fagan, 1987).

The second migration brought the maritime ancestors of the Aleuts and Eskimos and is thought to have occurred 10,000 to 11,000 years ago (Joseph, 1991). These were the last aboriginal people to populate the continent (Billard, 1974). The peopling of America from Alaska to Cape Horn in South America was a process that lasted approximately 25,000 years. All overland travel from Asia was completed about 10,000 years ago when the earth warmed and the land bridge disappeared (Joseph, 1991).

Indians throughout the Americas exhibit similarities in physical characteristics, but are as diverse as other racial groups. Ranging from coppery brown to a yellow brown, marked variations in size and shape of the head indicate they are not one people. Some are very tall and others, such as Eskimos, are quite short. By the time Europeans reached the Americas, evolution had worked on the original descendants, perhaps explaining the enormous diversity of tribes populating the two continents (Josephy, 1991).

A host of languages were spoken, some closely related and others unintelligible. A final classification has not yet been made of Indian languages spoken at the time of first contact with Europeans. Major John Wesley Powell, explorer and later director of the Smithsonian Institute Bureau of Ethnology, made a classification in 1891 that is still widely used. He classified the languages into 56 separate linguistic groups with four major sub-divisions: Algonquin, Iroquoian, Athabaskan, and Siouan (Josephy, 1991). These 56 principal stocks may have contained as many as 500 different languages and dialects (McNickle, 1975). Linguistic scholars believe that the oldest extant Indian languages in the western hemisphere are that of the Nambicuaras and related tribes located in nearly inaccessible regions of Central South America, indicating the earliest immigrants began expanding southward almost upon arrival in the New World. Common linguistic and cultural traditions survive to the present on both the Siberian and North American side of the Bering Strait (Fagan, 1987). The linguistic link is probably the most convincing argument for assigning Asian origins to Native Americans.

#### Consider the Native American View

The Bering Strait crossing represents the theory of the White Man and the scientific community; it has never gained acceptance by Native Americans who have orally passed on their history from generation to generation. American Indians feel they are entirely different from Old World peoples. They view the lack of proto-humans as convincing evidence of insufficient exploration. The theory of migration from Asia is unacceptable to Native Americans because scientific conclusions are based on data they believe has not yet been discovered. Native American author and professor Vine Deloria, Jr., of the Standing Rock Sioux, suggests the Bering Strait theory is preferred by the White Man and is therefore accepted as fact. No well-worn paths that show migratory patterns exist, and even if they did, it would not show in which direction the footprints were headed (Ballantine, 1993).

Regardless of the theory one subscribes to, Native American forebears have been on this continent for thousands of years. This unbroken tenure of life in this land creates a real connection that American Indians feel that makes them unique among all inhabitants of our country (Momaday, ed. Josephy, 1992). Consider the words of Jimmie Durham, a Western Cherokee testifying against the construction of a dam in a 1978 Congressional hearing:

Is there a human being who does not revere his homeland, even though he may not return?...In our own history, we teach that we were created there, which is truer than anthropological truth because it was there that we were given our vision as the Cherokee people....In the language of my people...there is a word for land: Eloheh. This same word also means history, culture, and religion. We cannot separate our place on earth from our lives on the earth nor from our vision nor our meaning as a people. We are taught from childhood that the animals and even the trees and plants that we share a place with are our brothers and sisters. So when we speak of land, we are not speaking of property, territory, or even a piece of ground upon which our houses sit and our crops are grown. We are speaking of something truly sacred. (Matthiessen,1984)

### Indians of the Northwest Coast

The Northwest Coast of North America is a culture area 1,500 miles long and rarely more than 50 miles wide at its broadest point. It is bordered by the coastal mountains of British Columbia to the east and in the continental United States, the Cascade Mountains to the east and Pacific Ocean to the west. This region was populated as early as 11,000 years ago by people migrating south from northern Alaska, northward from the Oregon region after traveling through ice-free passages to the west, and by groups from the interior that had followed rivers flowing westward to the Pacific ([http://www.cabrillo.cc.ca.us/~crsmith/noamer\\_nwcoast.html](http://www.cabrillo.cc.ca.us/~crsmith/noamer_nwcoast.html)). Living along the misty and heavily-forested shores in a narrow coastal area extending from Alaska's Prince William Sound to northern California are numerous tribes who once possessed a dramatic culture of wealth-conscious societies, class distinctions, and skilled artisans. The northernmost of these tribes, the Tlingits, lived in the area bounded by Prince William Sound in the north and the lower Alaskan panhandle in the south. Other tribes bordered what is now British Columbia in Canada, the Washington, Oregon, and California coasts.

The Tlingits, Haidas, and other tribes developed a stable society of considerable splendor and complexity. These tribes were not dependent on agriculture because of an abundance of food from the waters and forests around them. The waters provided ample quantities of salmon, halibut, cod, and candlefish (used in the production of oil). Before

modern dams and pollution degraded these waters, salmon were so numerous they nearly filled the river from bank to bank. One early explorer to the region remarked: “you could walk across on their backs” (Farb,1988). Several species of fish returned from the ocean to the rivers at different times providing the Indians with five to seven runs during the summer and autumn months. Spring brought a run of candlefish that were so rich in oil that one could make a candle merely by running a wick through it. Whales were harvested from coastal rivers and game and berries were plentiful in the surrounding forests (Farb, 1988).

Environment alone does not determine the type of society that will develop in any certain location, but the abundance of food on the Northwest Coast certainly led to a largely sedentary population. The yields from the seas and shores along with the discovery of techniques for preserving fish, by smoking and drying, resulted in vast surpluses (Farb, 1988). Due to the development of food preservation techniques, villages could be established further inland in sheltered locations as dried or smoked salmon could be easily transported. So important were salmon that they were portrayed as legendary immortals that sacrificed their bodies to feed humans. After the fish were consumed, the bones were tossed back into the water to return the spirit to the sea to be reincarnated so they would return in abundance the following year (Woodhead, 1992). Houses were disassembled for reassembly at a summer camp near the fisheries where salmon spawned. Larger populations arose than would have been otherwise possible with hunting-gathering economies not as favorably located (Farb, 1988).

Whaling and sealing were also important to the Northwest Coast Indians. Whalers in forty-foot canoes carrying several men would range as far as twenty miles offshore in pursuit of migrating whales as long as their boats and much heavier. These whales, weighing up to forty tons, were towed back to shore and butchered in a manner that left little to waste. The blubber was rendered into oil, the meat preserved, the intestines made into containers, the sinews braided into rope, and the bones fashioned into tools (Woodhead, 1992). This use of the entire animal is consistent with Plains Indians who used every part of the buffalo.

American Indians of the maritime culture relied heavily on materials from nearby forests. Cedar logs were hollowed out for canoes, plant fibers were twined into ropes and nets, and bark and roots were woven into mats, bags, hats, and baskets. Carpentry tools were developed to fell the red cedar trees used in most construction. The red cedar was, like the salmon, considered a generous spirit because it was plentiful and easily split and shaped using stone adzes, wedges, bone drills, and other implements (Woodhead, 1992).

Winter settlements consisted of 35 to 40 cedar-plank houses arranged in rows. Each house had a false-front façade that portrayed mythical beings. Removable siding and roofs made of red and yellow cedar logs were grooved and notched so they could be joined without nails and pegs. Gabled roofs were supported by enormous cedar beams and cedar posts. This framework was permanent, but the roofing and siding were dismantled for transport to summer camps. Families maintained houses at each campsite to which they reattached the roofing and siding when changing residences according to

the seasons ([http://www.cabrillo.cc.ca.us/~crsmith/noamer\\_nwcoast.html](http://www.cabrillo.cc.ca.us/~crsmith/noamer_nwcoast.html)). The Tlingits were so thorough at dismantling their houses that early European settlers thought they had come upon an abandoned village (Woodhead, 1993).

Members of the Tlingit society identified themselves with clans called either the Raven or Eagle. Governed by a chief, clans controlled the social, political, and ceremonial life of the tribe by molding it into a cohesive unit. The clan linked a member to his or her ancestors and to future generations. The house is a sub-unit of the clan and referred both to a physical structure and the matrilineage of the tribe. The house group consisted of a leader, his brothers, their wives and children, and the house leader's matrilineal nephews. Members joined forces to hunt, fish, and in the preservation of food. Modern Tlingits live in houses that contain the immediate family, but ceremonies and potlatches are held in clan houses. Children are born into the mother's clan, but maintain a special relationship with the father's clan. They inherit all the rights to land and property held by the clan (Hoxie, 1996).

The mild winters of this coastal region and plentiful food supply afforded these tribes the time to develop artistic crafts and leisure activities. A complex social and religious system developed that included an intense competition for status by an ostentatious acquisition and spending of wealth that is uncharacteristic of American Indian societies (Josephy, 1991). This accumulation of wealth was not a tax or tribute, but a realization that one would eventually get back a portion in return at a potlatch. This word comes from the Nootka word *patshatl*, "to give". While unusual to modern Americans raised in a market-based economy where one tries to gain the upper hand in a transaction, the Native Americans of the Northwest Coast saw this not as an economic transaction, but as gift giving. The competition consisted of giving away more than they received, thus humbling the recipient. These potlatches provided benefits to the tribe by providing good fellowship and the making of peaceful relations with other tribes. The participants not only received a lavish feast, but the order in which guests were seated and gifts distributed served to validate the rank of each participant. All members contributed willingly because it validated their rank; those who lagged in contributions would be dropped down several notches (Farb, 1988).

Anthropologists disagree over the meaning behind the potlatch. The potlatch served to validate property rights, confirm social status, or provide an alternative to physical violence between tribes. It was all these and more; it served as a way of ensuring that food surpluses were built up for times of scarcity thereby providing a safety net. Those who held a potlatch could use it both as a means of repayment of a previous debt or as a means of ensuring future help. It was also effective in maintaining high levels of food production in times of plenty (Farb, 1988).

### Totem Poles

When the people of the Northwest Coast were first encountered by the White Man, there were marked differences between tribes, but all were obsessed by the accumulation of property and prestige. Especially treasured by these tribes were material

items such as blankets, canoes, and carvings, as well as ownership of highly valued rights to a specific heraldic crest, name, guardian spirit, or a song no one else was permitted to sing (Josephy, 1991). The most prestigious manifestation of Northwest American Indian culture is the totem pole. The word totem is derived from the Algonquin language of the Ojibwa. The word *ototeman* means “He is my relative” (Farb, 1988). This huge, upright log carved with animal figures and mythological creatures served not as a totem (a symbol), but as a family crest combining ancestral pride with a display of rank. The display of such a crest was a public announcement of one’s status such as the crests of prominent European families (Farb, 1988).

Like heraldic crests, these poles told of the mythological beginnings of the great families, at a time before time, when animals and mythic beasts and men lived as equals and all that was to be was established by the raven and eagle, bear and wolf, frog and beaver, thunderbird and whale. They told the people of the completeness of their culture, the continuing lineages of the Great families, their closeness to the magic world of myth and legend. The legends usually deal with the exploits of Raven, tales of migration, the flood, intertribal wars, and early contact with white men.

(<http://www.yale.edu/ynhti/curriculum/units/1985/6/85.06.01.x.html>)

The love for ostentatious displays of wealth of the Northwest Coast American Indians is evident in the totem pole. Vacant spaces, straight lines, and sharp angles were disliked. Totem poles are read from top to bottom. The principal character was placed on top followed by objects that recalled the legend, while the bottom consisted of the wife’s clan symbol (<http://www.yale.edu/ynhti/curriculum/units/1985/6/85.06.01.x.html>).

### The Aleuts

Perhaps the least known group of the indigenous peoples of Alaska is the Aleut. Indigenous peoples of the Americas were first called Indians by Columbus. He thought he had found a route to the Indies and called the people he encountered *Indios*. The term *Aleut*, however, came from external sources. In the 1740’s, Russian fur traders first came into contact with the Aleutian Islands and found a people living there who they thought were the Aliutors - a coastal indigenous group they had encountered on the Kamchatka Peninsula of Siberia. The Aleuts occupy the chain of volcanic islands between Alaska and the Kamchatka Peninsula of Siberia. Various distinct groups exist in the Aleutian Islands, but the term Aleut is currently used to describe all peoples of the Aleutian

Islands, Kodiak Island, the lower Alaska and Kenai Peninsulas, and Prince William Sound (Hoxie, 1996).

Slightly different from the Eskimos with whom they apparently share a common ancestry, the Aleuts have absorbed influences from Ipiutak cultures of the Northwest Alaskan coast and also possess elements in their culture from contact with American Indians of the Northwest Pacific Coast. Aleutians traditionally wore carved wooden hats, wove beautiful baskets, and in ceremonial and death rites, observed social divisions like the Northwest Coast American Indians. They used kayaks for hunting sea mammals like Eskimos, but relied principally on salmon and birds for food (Josephy, 1991).

The various linguistic groups who make up the Aleutian chain initially resisted invasions by the Russians, but eventually fell victim to superior firepower and diseases. The Russians ruled the Aleutian chain for nearly a century. During this time, the population decreased dramatically and the Aleutian culture adopted many Russian customs. In 1867, the rights to Alaska were purchased by the United States and a new acculturation process began. The long-lasting influence of the Russians is still felt in the presence of the Russian Orthodox churches that remain a centerpiece of community life (Hoxie, 1996).

#### The Eskimos

Our fathers have inherited from their fathers all the old rules of life which are based on the wisdom of generations. We do not know how, we cannot say why, but we keep those rules in order that we may live untroubled...We fear what we see about us and we fear all the invisible things that are about us, all that we have heard of in our forefather's myths and legends. Aua (Iglulik), (Taylor, 1994)

The land of the Eskimo covers a vast territory, stretching 4,000 miles from eastern Siberia to Greenland. Much of this area is a desolate place where summers are brief, cool, and thick with insects. Savage, gloomy winters last for nine months of the year. However, not all is desolation as often depicted. In warmer months, the waters and tundra teem with wildlife, and majestic glacier-covered mountains rise from the seas. Brilliant skies, the northern lights (aurora borealis), and summer nights of midnight sun contribute to the great beauty of the arctic. The land is harsh, but the Eskimos have learned to cope with these rigors (Billard, 1974).

The Eskimos and Aleuts of the Aleutian Islands are different from other aboriginal peoples of the New World. They are descended from a common ancestry

known as Bering Sea Mongoloids who inherited both Siberian and Arctic cultures while adding their own distinctive adaptations (Josephy, 1991). Some students of native peoples suggest that Aleuts and Eskimos might not be American Indians but a distinct species of people who had originated in and under the extreme arctic environment. They exhibit a remarkable uniformity in physical stature, language, and culture. Their distinctive language is unrelated to any known tongue. Most striking is their physical appearance: short and plump with a fatty layer under the skin, narrow noses, and narrow eyelids with a Mongolian fold (Josephy, 1991). Considering the harsh climate of the arctic, these physical traits make the Eskimo ideally suited to their environment. Even their dialects, with a few exceptions, are mutually intelligible (Farb, 1988).

The Eskimo refer to themselves as *inuit* which is the plural of *inuk*-meaning human. The name almost all Native Americans call themselves means “human being” or “the people” in their respective languages. The term Eskimo was coined by a Jesuit priest in 1611 who heard neighboring Indians call them *eskimantisk*, which means “eaters of raw meat” (Farb, 1988).

No other pre-industrial people on earth inhabit such a vast territory as the Eskimos who occupy a region halfway around the globe on the Arctic coast. Scientists divide the inhabitants of the Arctic region into various groups. Coastal inhabitants are called the Inuit or Eskimo, while inland forest inhabitants are considered Indian. These divisions reflect linguistic and ecological boundaries; the Eskimos and Aleuts speak Eskaleutian languages and rely upon sea animals for subsistence while Indians speak Athabaskan or Algonquin languages and rely on forest animals and fresh-water fish. Several groups called the *Yupik* speak a western Eskimoan dialect and are found on Kodiak Island, the Alaskan Pacific Coast, the Southwestern mainland, Nunivak Island, and the Siberian side of the Bering Strait and St. Lawrence Island. Another division is an Eastern Eskimoan group called the *Inupiaq*, whose language is spoken with little variation from central Alaska across northernmost Canada to Greenland (Kehoe, 1981).

### Adaptation to the Environment

The most daunting task for the first people who inhabited the Arctic and sub-Arctic region was adapting to the unique harshness of the environment. Temperatures in the arctic are below freezing for at least nine months of the year. Sub-surface soil in the tundra is permanently frozen. Temperatures above freezing saturate the top level of soil making overland travel and tracking animals difficult. In both the tundra and taiga the summer brings hordes of mosquitoes and biting flies. The special warm clothing loses its thermal efficiency when it becomes damp. Contrary to the belief of those raised in warmer climates, the return of winter and frozen conditions make traveling easier. Food and supplies are easily hauled by dogsled in the Arctic and by snowshoes and toboggan sleds in the sub-Arctic; snowmobiles are now commonly used. Native people see the cold of winter not as a hindrance, but as a resource (Ridington, ed. Josephy, 1992).

In summer, the different landmasses are distinguishable from bodies of water, while in winter, land and sea mesh to present an appearance of continual ice. People can

travel more easily and even live offshore on frozen ice packs, giving them easy access to two important food sources; the ringed seal and bearded seal. The availability of marine food is the primary factor in the adaptation of people to the coastal arctic region. The arctic tundra is largely treeless, but warmer temperatures bring a heavy growth of lichen or mosses and flowering plants. These provide food for herds of caribou that migrate back and forth between the tundra and taiga. Other permanent animal residents of the tundra include the musk ox, grizzly bears, wolves, wolverines, arctic foxes and hares, weasels, squirrels, mice, and other small rodents. Ravens and snowy owls stay all winter, but summer brings more than fifty species of migratory birds to nest and breed (Ridington, ed. Josephy, 1992).

Eskimos traditionally built their houses from whatever materials were available. The Eastern Arctic includes houses made of stone while many in the west and Alaska were made of driftwood and sod. The famous domed igloo was found most often in Northern Canada and was rarely used in Alaska. The igloo was actually quite warm and even stuffy inside. The entrance was usually below ground level so that warm air inside could not escape through the door. Some igloos had long passageways and held up to 60 people. Others were used as emergency shelters in extreme conditions (Josephy, 1991).

Before adopting western-style housing, Eskimos lived as extended families under one roof. The size of the household depended upon the population density and availability of resources. Relationships are bilateral, meaning that equal emphasis is placed on the mother's and father's sides of the family. The extended scope of Eskimo relationships served as a means of survival in harsh conditions. The ability to establish kinship while hunting in a distant community sometimes meant the difference between life and death (Hoxie, 1996).

### The Hunter and the Hunted

Hunting and gathering as a means of subsistence are as old as civilization. Most human cultures have been based on this way of life for thousands of years. Hunting remained the primary way of life in the Arctic and sub-Arctic even as agriculture and industry replaced it throughout most of the world. Moreover, Native American cultures evolved over thousands of years from the culture of their hunting ancestors.

Hunting served not only a means of subsistence, but as a manner of thinking about humans in relation to other beings. Animals are beings with whom humans had to establish trust and understanding in order to present themselves to humans as food sources. Since the American Indian felt the spirit as well as the body of the hunted animal is touched, a sense of responsibility existed between the two. Animals were not taken against their will. Alaskan Natives are bonded to the ice and sea creatures that sustain them. Plants and animals as partners with whom they negotiate life-giving relationships.

People of the sub-Arctic expect to see game in a dream before the actual hunt. Dreaming allowed the hunter to organize the complex relationship between the animal

and the hunter. Elders send youngsters alone on vision quests to learn to understand the speech of an animal friend (Ridington, ed. Josephy, 1992).

Hunting in the Arctic and even life itself would be impossible without thermally efficient clothing. Eskimos rely almost exclusively on internally generated body heat as a source of thermal energy. Double caribou skin parkas, with matching pants and boots, are the most common choices. The hair on the parka faces outward on the outer garment and inward on the inner garment. Caribou hair is hollow, thereby providing superb insulation. This combination of the two parkas creates air circulation within the clothing while retaining high thermal efficiency (Ridington, ed. Josephy, 1992). Properly attired, an Eskimo hunter can remain motionless for hours at a seal's breathing hole even in extremely cold weather. The Eskimo's clothing retains sufficient body heat even at the low metabolic rate necessitated by this type of hunting. Non-native people see the tundra and taiga as an unproductive, empty, and alien wasteland where they can only exist on imported supplies, whereas adaptation to the unique demands of Arctic life by the ingenious design of insulated clothing used by the Arctic people have allowed them to thrive in their harsh environment.

Of all Native Americans, the Eskimos were likely the first inhabitants of the New World to be visited by Europeans. Norse explorers encountered them on the coast of Labrador as early as 1005. These first encounters were probably violent as several Norse sagas describe little people as *Skraelings*, a contemptuous term meaning barbarian or weakling (Farb, 1988). The number of Eskimos has never been great but initial contact with the White Man left them decimated by epidemics of smallpox, measles, and other diseases to which the natives had no immunity. An estimated 45,000 now live between Northern Siberia and Greenland (Farb, 1988). While small in numbers, the Eskimo population demonstrates man's ability to adapt and proliferate in extreme conditions.

#### Inherent Differences

American Indians from the Inuit of the arctic to tribes found in the jungles of South America view the earth as a living entity. This concept is also found among native peoples, from the Aborigines of Australia to Pacific Islanders. The planet is referred to as "mother" and is meant literally: plants, animals, and all life forms that germinate within her, are born, and dissolve back into her to become new life (Mander, 1992).

For most Americans, land is a dead thing. It means nothing. But to disconnect from the land is unthinkable for Indians. The land is everything. It's the source of our existence. It's where the ancestor's spirits live. It is not a commodity that can be bought or sold, and to rip it open to mine it is deeply sacrilegious to all Indian people. Nowadays

most Americans live in or near cities. They have no connection with the dirt, with the earth. They have no way of identifying with the most essential feelings that define Indian experience and values. Joe Sanchez, Shoshone Indian (Mander, 1992)

Native cultures, whether found in the Arctic or desert Southwest, possess similar attitudes to nature. Those that have not entirely succumbed to Western influences still practice collective production of food, share the commodities produced, and tend to live in extended families. Religion is nature-based and Native Americans hold similar concepts regarding art, architecture, and even time. Technological societies often feel an innate superiority to nature and non-technological peoples (Mander, 1992). The following excerpts from Jerry Mander's, *In the Absence of the Sacred*, (pages 215-219), provides an enlightening, side-by-side comparison between technological and non-technological peoples.

<b>Technological Peoples</b>	<b>Native Peoples</b>
<b>ECONOMICS</b>	
Concept of private property a basic value: includes resources, land, ability to buy and sell, and inheritance. Some state ownership. Corporate ownership predominates.	No private ownership of resources such as land, water, minerals, or plant life. No concept of selling land. No inheritance.
Goods produced mostly for sale, not for personal use.	Goods produced for use value.
Surplus production, profit motive essential. Sales techniques must create "need," hence advertising.	Subsistence goals: no profit motive, little surplus production.
Economic growth required, especially in capitalist societies, hence need for increased production, increased use of resources, expansion of production and market territories.	Steady-state economies: no concept of economic growth.
Currency system-abstract value.	Barter system-concrete value.
Competition (in capitalist countries), production for private gain. Reward according to task/wages.	Cooperative, collective production.
Average workday, 8-12 hours.	Average workday, 3-5 hours.
<b>SOCIOCULTURAL ARRANGEMENTS AND DEMOGRAPHICS</b>	
Large-scale societies; most societies have high population density.	Small-scale societies, all people acquainted; low population density.

Lineage mostly patrilineal.	Lineage mostly matrilineal, with some variation; family property rights run through female.
Nuclear two-or one-parent families; also “singles.”	Extended families: generations, sometimes many families, live together.
Revere the young.	Revere the old.
History written in books, portrayed in television docudramas.	History transmitted in oral tradition, carried through memory.
<b>RELATION TO ENVIRONMENT</b>	
Living beyond nature’s limits encouraged; natural terrain not considered a limitation; conquest of nature a celebrated value; alteration of nature desirable; anti-harmony; resources exploited.	Living with natural ecosystem encouraged; harmony with nature the norm; only mild alteration of nature for immediate needs: food, clothing, shelter; no permanent damage.
Humans viewed as superior life form; earth viewed as “dead.”	Entire world viewed as alive: plants, animals, people, rocks. Humans not superior, but equal part of web of life. Reciprocal relationship with non-human life.
<b>ARCHITECTURE</b>	
Construction materials transported from distant places.	Construction materials usually gathered locally.
Construction designed to survive individual human life.	Construction designed to eventually dissolve back into land (except for pyramids built by minority of Indians); materials biodegradable in one lifetime.
Space designed for separation and privacy.	Space designed for communal activity.
Hard-edged forms; earth covered with concrete.	Soft forms; earth not paved.
<b>RELIGION AND PHILOSOPHY</b>	
Separation of spirituality from rest of life in most western cultures (though not in some Muslim, Hindu, or Buddhist states); church and state separated; materialism is dominant in Western countries.	Spirituality integrated with all aspects of daily life.
Either monotheistic concept of single, male god, or atheistic.	Polytheistic concepts based on nature, male and female forces, animism.
Futuristic/linear concept of time; de-emphasis of past.	Integration of past and present.
The dead are regarded as gone.	The dead are regarded as present.
Individuals gain most information from media, schools, authority figures outside their	Individuals gain experience from personal experiences.

immediate community or experience.	
Time measured by machines; schedules dictate when to do things.	Time measured by awareness according to observance of nature; time to do something is when time is right.
Saving and acquiring.	Sharing and giving.

The chart clearly illustrates the enormous differences in native cultures compared to modern western society. Forced to live a lifestyle not of their own choosing has created many difficulties and problems in native societies. Poverty is a condition that exists in many Native American communities. According to *Native America in the Twentieth Century*, 61 percent of those who live on reservations are at the poverty level, with unemployment levels exceeding 80 percent. Some reservations have 95 percent unemployment (Davis, ed., 1994). This viewpoint of a Yupik Eskimo of Alaska in a publication of the *Association of Village Council Presidents* shows that poverty statistics usually reflect a Eurocentric world-view.

Poverty has only recently been introduced to Native communities...for thousands of years, people subsisted from the land and ocean along the west coast of Alaska. It was a hard life, but it had none of the frustrations and stigmas of poverty, for the people were not poor. Living from the land sustained life and evolved the Yupik culture, a culture in which wealth was the common wealth of the people as provided by the earth. Whether food was plentiful or scarce among the people. This sharing created a bond between people that helped insure survival. Life was hard then, but people found life satisfying. Today life is getting easier, but it is no longer satisfying. (Mander, 1992)

A renewed respect for Native American ways has drawn the attention of many people, especially in the field of environmental conservation. The reciprocity between man and animal that has forever characterized native culture has given them an expertise in understanding the delicate balance needed to preserve resources. University of Alberta anthropologist Milton M.R. Freeman explains this relationship in a study of the Inuit people and their caribou hunting philosophy:

The Inuit hold that each small group of Peary caribou is a social group and there is good reason for those particular animals being together. Inuit hunters point out that given the marginality of the environment for herbivores, older/larger animals are important to the survival of the group. These older animals have experience and they have the physical strength enabling them to dig through the snow for food. Old animals are also more passive relative to the more nervous, younger animals or pregnant females, and this behavioral trait has a calming effect on the younger animals in the group. (Mander, 1992)

In fact, both western and native systems rely on empirical evidence, but the approach is quite different. The native community relies primarily on observation and the collective knowledge of an ongoing oral tradition passed down through the generations.

### Alaskan Settlement

Europeans first contacted the Northwest Coast people in 1741. The subsequent discovery of the value of sea otter pelts by James Cook in 1778, began a process of prolonged contact between Europeans and Native peoples. The Spanish established a post at Nootka Sound in 1789, the Russians at New Archangel (Sitka) in 1799, and the British, after 1812, along the coast of present day British Columbia.

The 1850's saw a dying out of the fur trade, as well as many of the Native people, due to the introduction of various infectious diseases that often decimated entire villages. One smallpox epidemic wiped out 96 percent of the Lower Chinook population from 1832-1835 ([http://www.cabrillo.cc.ca.us/~crsmith/noamer\\_nwcoast.html](http://www.cabrillo.cc.ca.us/~crsmith/noamer_nwcoast.html)).

The arrival of more settlers in the 1850's escalated tensions with the native people as the Federal government increased economic and political controls. The U.S. purchased Alaska from Russia in 1867, and had little use for it for some time. It was often referred to as "Seward's Folly," named after the U.S. Secretary of State, William H. Seward, who arranged the purchase. The final price was \$7,200,000. That translates to 2.5 cents per acre for a territory of 586,400 square miles, nearly twice the size of Texas (<http://www.everythingalaska.com/eta.sfy.html>). The growth of the commercial fishing industry and the Yukon Gold Rush soon caused native people to be outnumbered.

## Alaskan Native Brotherhood

In 1912, ten Tlingit Indians formed the Alaskan Native Brotherhood (ANB). Due to the influence of missionary societies, the founders of ANB had the following objectives: recognition of citizenship rights for natives, education, and the abolition of aboriginal customs regarded by the Whites as uncivilized such as the use of Native languages and the potlatch. By the 1920's, ANB had revised its aims and adopted a more aggressive stance on issues such as the two-school system where Native children in predominantly White communities had to attend government rather than public schools, discrimination against Natives in theaters, stores, restaurants, and other public places, resistance against reservations, and the destruction of salmon by commercial fish traps. The ANB continues to play a major role today in the relationships between the Tlingit and members of agencies outside their native society ([http://www.cabrillo.cc.ca.us/~crsmith/noamer\\_nwcoast.html](http://www.cabrillo.cc.ca.us/~crsmith/noamer_nwcoast.html)).

## Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA)

Implemented in 1973 to ostensibly stimulate economic growth and development in Alaska by placing land and capital within the control of Alaskan Natives, the Act authorized Alaskan Natives to select and receive title to 44 million acres of public land and a \$962,000,000 cash settlement for their aboriginal claim to land in the state. The act established a system of village and regional Native corporations to manage the lands, cash payments, and made extensive provisions regarding the operations of the corporations (Ibid.).

Unlike the situation in the continental United States where reservations often encouraged American Indians to abandon traditional lifestyles, ANCSA established "reserves" with the intention that Natives would use them to remain self-sufficient.

## Conclusion

This publication has sought to address a little-known segment of our great nation that lives far from the general population. While small in number, their stewardship over one of the greatest land areas in our country and their concern for the environment make learning more about their traditions, customs, and history a worthwhile experience. By considering the innate respect American Indians and Alaskan Natives feel for all living beings and things, perhaps our technological society will have much to learn from this ancient and vibrant culture.

## References

- American Indians and Alaska Natives. Retrieved June 26, 2003, from <http://128.174.5.51/denix/Public/Native/Outreach/American/indian.html>
- American Indians of the Pacific Northwest Digital Collection. Retrieved June 26, 2003, from <http://content.lib.washington.edu/aipnw/>
- An Introduction to North America's Native People, Northwest Coast Culture Area. Retrieved June 26, 2003, from [http://www.cabrillo.cc.ca.us/~crsmith/noamer\\_nwcoast.html](http://www.cabrillo.cc.ca.us/~crsmith/noamer_nwcoast.html)
- Ballantine, Betty & Ian. (Eds.). The Native Americans, An Illustrated History. Atlanta: Turner Publishing, 1993.
- Billard, Jules, B. (Ed.). The World of the American Indian. Washington, D.C.: National Geographic Society, 1974.
- Davis, Mary, B. (Ed.). Native America in the Twentieth Century. New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1994.
- Everything Alaska. Retrieved July 7, 2003, from <http://www.everythingalaska.com/eta.sfy.html>
- Fagan, Brian, M. The Great Journey, The Peopling of Ancient America. New York: Thames and Hudson, 1991.
- Farb, Peter. Man's Rise to Civilization. New York: E.P. Dutton, 1988.
- Hacker, Andrew. Two Nations, Black and White, Separate, Hostile, Unequal. New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., 1992.
- Heroes of War. Retrieved July 3, 2003, from <http://cnn.com/SPECIALS/2003/iraq/heroes/piestewa.html>
- Hoxie, Frederick, E. (Ed.). Encyclopedia of North American Indians. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1996.
- Joseph, Alvin, M., Jr. (Ed.). America in 1492, The World of the Indian Peoples Before the Arrival of Columbus. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1992.
- Joseph, Alvin, M., Jr. The Indian Heritage of America. New York: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1991.
- Kehoe, Alice, B. North American Indians, A Comprehensive Account. New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1981.

- Lori Ann Piestewa, U.S. Army. Retrieved July 3, 2003, from [http://www.8thwood.com/lori\\_ann\\_piestewa.htm](http://www.8thwood.com/lori_ann_piestewa.htm)
- Mander, Jerry. In the Absence of the Sacred, The Failure of Technology & the Survival of the Indian Nations. New York: Sierra Club Books, in conjunction with Crown Publisher's, Random House, Inc., 1992.
- Matthiessen, Peter. Indian Country. New York: Penguin Books, 1992.
- Maxwell, James A. (Ed.). America's Fascinating Indian Heritage. New York: The Reader's Digest Association, 1978.
- McNickle, D'Arcy. They Came Here First. New York: Octagon Books, 1975.
- Stuart, George, E. (Ed.). Discovering Man's Past in the Americas. Washington, D.C., National Geographic Society, 1969.
- The American Indian and Alaska Native Population: 2000. U.S. Census Bureau, U.S. Department of Commerce, U.S. Census 2000.
- Totem Poles of the North American Northwest Coast Indians. Retrieved June 26, 2003, from <http://www.yale.edu/ynhti/curriculum/units/1985/6/85.06.01.x.html>
- Washburn, Wilcomb, E. The Indian in America. New York: Harper & Row, 1975.
- Woodhead, Henry (Ed.). Keepers of the Totem. Richmond, VA: Time-Life Books, 1993.
- Woodhead, Henry (Ed.). The First Americans. Richmond, VA: Time-Life Books, 1992.



## In Memoriam: Private First Class Lori Ann Piestewa

**Mom**

**Soldier**

**Hopi Indian**

A member of the 507<sup>th</sup> Ordnance Maintenance Company, 23-year old Army Private First Class Lori Piestewa and her fellow soldiers were ambushed on March, 23, 2003 in combat in Iraq when they took a wrong turn and became lost. A Hopi Indian raised on a Navajo reservation, Piestewa was the mother of a 4-year old son and a 3-year old daughter. By giving the last full measure of devotion to her country, she became the first woman killed in combat in this conflict and the first ever American Indian woman killed in any military conflict.

Service in the United States military is a tradition in Piestewa's family. Her father served in Vietnam and her grandfather served in World War II. Of the 12,000 Native Americans currently serving in the Armed Forces, there are 56 of her fellow Hopi, 48 of whom are serving, or have served in Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Hopis interpret the name Piestewa, as "the People by the Water" and as "the Ceremonies at the Springs." As befits her name, rose petals were scattered at the reflecting pool of Arlington National Cemetery on Memorial Day at the Women in Military Service for America Memorial. The Hopi believe that when one is deceased, they return home. The "Lady Warrior," as her family calls her, was buried April 12, 2003 on the Hopi reservation. Lori has indeed returned home. All members of the Armed Forces are proud to call her one of our own.

"Our family is proud of her. She is our hero. We are going to hold that in our hearts. She will not be forgotten. It gives us comfort to know that she is at peace right now."---Wayland Piestewa

## Frequently Asked Questions About Native Americans

- What is the legal status of American Indian and Alaskan Native tribes?

Article 1, section 8 of the Constitution of the United States vests the Federal government with the authority to engage in relations with the tribes, and thereby, firmly places tribes in the Constitutional family of our nation. When the government authority of tribes was first challenged in the 1830's, Chief Justice John Marshall articulated the fundamental principle that has guided the evolution of Federal Indian law to the present—*tribes possess a nationhood status and retain inherent powers of self-government.*

- What are the inherent powers of tribal self-government?

Tribes possess all powers of government, except those which Congress has expressly extinguished or which the Supreme Court has ruled are inconsistent with overriding national interests. Tribes, therefore, possess the right to form their own government; enforce laws, both civil and criminal; to tax; to establish membership; to license and regulate activities; to zone; and to exclude persons from tribal territories.

Limitations on tribal powers of self-government are few, and include the same limitations applicable to states; e.g., neither tribes nor states have the power to make war, engage in foreign relations, or coin money.

- How are tribes organized?

Tribes have the inherent right to operate under their own governmental systems. Many have adopted constitutions, while others operate under Articles of Association or other bodies of law, and some still have traditional systems of government. The chief executive of a tribe is generally called the tribal chairperson, but may be called principal chief, governor, or president. The chief executive usually presides over what is typically called the tribal council. The tribal council performs the legislative function for the tribe, although some tribes require a referendum of the membership to enact laws.

- What does the term “Federal recognized tribe” mean?

“Recognition” is a legal term meaning that the United States recognizes a government-to-government relationship with a tribe and that a tribe exists politically in a “domestic dependent nation status.” A Federally recognized tribe is one that was in existence, or evolved as a successor to a tribe at the time of original contact with non-Indians.

Federally recognized tribes possess certain inherent rights of self-government and entitlement to certain Federal benefits, services, and protections because of the special trust relationship.

- What is the jurisdiction of tribal courts?

Tribal courts have civil jurisdiction over Indians and non-Indians who either reside or do business on the reservation. Tribal courts have criminal jurisdiction over tribal offenses occurring, and committed by Americans in Indian Country.

- Are American Indians and Alaskan Natives citizens?

American Indians and Alaskan Natives are citizens of the United States and of the States in which they reside. They are also citizens of the tribes to which they belong according to the criteria established by each tribe.

- What is the relationship between the United States and the tribes?

The relationship between the tribes and the United States is one of a government-to-government. This principle has shaped the entire history of dealings between the Federal government and the tribes, and is lodged in the Constitution of the United States.

- Do American Indians and Alaskan Natives have the right to hold Federal, State, and Local government offices?

American Indians and Alaskan Natives have the same rights as all citizens to hold public office. In this century, American Indians and Alaskan Native men and women have held elective and appointed offices at all levels of State, Local, and Federal government. Charles Curtis, a member of the Kaw tribe of Kansas, served as Vice President of the United States under President Herbert Hoover.

Indians have also been elected to the United States Congress. Ben Nighthorse Campbell, a member of the Cheyenne Tribe of Montana, was elected to the senate in 1992 after having served his third term in the United States House of Representatives.

- What Is a reservation?

Reservations are territories reserved as permanent tribal homelands. Some were created through treaties, while others were created by statutes or executive orders.

- What is meant by tribal self-determination and self-governance?

These are important concepts in Federal Indian policy, and are also the objectives of major Federal legislation. In policy, the concepts are similar to the block grant system, by which State and Local governments are accorded the opportunity to administer Federal programs directly.

Under the self-determination and self-governance laws, tribes have been accorded the authority to control and operate Federally funded and administered programs whenever tribal governments choose to do so. Moreover, these laws affirm the fundamental American belief that local problems are best resolved at the local level using the collective resources of the nation.

- What is the relationship between tribal and State governments?

Because the Constitution vests authority over Indian affairs in the Federal government, generally, states have no authority over tribal governments. Tribal governments are not subordinate to State governments. They retain the right to enact and enforce stricter or more lenient laws and regulations than those of the neighboring state(s).

Tribes possess both the right and the power to regulate activities on their lands independently from the neighboring State government. However, tribes frequently collaborate and cooperate with states through compacts or other agreements. The Tribal-to-State relationship is also one of a government to a government.

- What is the role of the Bureau of Indian Affairs in the provision of services to American Indians and Alaskan Natives?

The role of the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) has changed dramatically over time. Until the 1960's, the BIA was the direct provider of services to American Indians and Alaskan Natives. The BIA is now implementing the Federal policy and law of self-determination and self-governance.

In its modern role, BIA technical specialists work with tribal managers in protecting and managing trust resources pending informed decision-making by the tribe on the development of the resources. Also, BIA assists tribes to enhance their quality of life and to raise the standard of living in tribal communities.

- What are treaty rights?

From 1777 to 1871, the United States relations with individual Indian nations were conducted through treaty negotiations. These “contracts among nations” created unique sets of rights for the benefit of each of the treaty-making tribes. Those rights, like any other treaty obligations of the United States, represent “*the supreme law of the land.*” As such, the protection of treaty rights is a critical part of the Federal Indian trust relationship.

- What is the Federal Indian Trust Responsibility?

The Federal Indian Trust Responsibility is a legal obligation under which the United States “has charged itself with moral obligations of the highest responsibility and trust” toward Indian tribes (*Seminole Nation v. United States, 1942*). It was first discussed by U.S. Supreme Court Chief Justice John Marshall in *Cherokee Nation v. Georgia* (1831). Over the years, the trust doctrine has been the center of numerous other Supreme Court cases. It is one of the most important principles in Federal Indian law.

The Federal Indian Trust Responsibility is a legally enforceable fiduciary obligation, on part of the United States, to protect tribal lands, assets, resources, and treaty rights, as well as a duty to carry out the mandates of Federal law with respect to American Indian and Alaskan Native tribes. In several cases discussing the trust responsibility, the Supreme Court has used language suggesting that it entails legal duties, moral obligations, and the fulfillment of understandings and expectations that have arisen over the entire course of dealings between the United States and the tribes.

(<https://128.174.5.51/denix/Public/Native/Outreach/American/indian.html>)