

NORTH CAROLINA INDIANS

INDIANS LONG AGO

American Indians were the first people to live in the continental United States and contributed many gifts to modern Americans and taught the settlers new ways of doing things. Each November in North Carolina, we celebrate Indian Heritage Month to recognize the many contributions of this population to our State and nation.

FOOD

American Indians taught the settlers new ways to hunt and fish when they came to North Carolina many years ago. The Indians caught fish in nets called weirs that were made from reeds which were woven or tied together. They would place the weir across the stream and anchor it with rocks or poles and they also caught fish with spears. Indians hunted big animals, like deer or bears, mostly with bows and arrows. History indicates that Indians used blow guns for hunting smaller animals such as rabbit and squirrel.

The Indians cooked fish and meat over a grill made of reeds or sticks, using clay pots. The pot was placed over the open fire to boil different foods, such as vegetables, fruits, nuts, roots and meat.

American Indians planted gardens much like gardens today. They grew beans, peas, melons, pumpkins, sunflowers, potatoes and other foods. The men took turns protecting the gardens and guarding the fields by scaring away birds and wild animals.

HOUSING

Let's be clear! American Indians in North Carolina did not live in teepees, as teepees were a type of housing used by plains Indians in the western part of the United States. Most of the Indians in North Carolina lived in small buildings made of wood and reeds. The frame of the house was made from wooden poles that were tied together. The walls and roof were made from reed mats or sheets of tree bark. Long tables or benches were usually the only furniture in the structure.

DRESS

American Indians made their own clothing and wore clothes made from deer skins, rabbit fur, and other animal skins. A great deal of preparation had to be made before the skins were ready to be sewn into clothing. First, the hair had to be scraped away from the skin; then the excess flesh had to be removed; next the hide was stretched and softened; and the final step was to smoke the hides to give them a golden brown coloration. Earrings, necklaces and bracelets were worn by men and women. This jewelry was made from bone, copper, shell and polished-stone beads.

Most men and women wore their hair long. Both men and women would use braid wraps that were decorated with certain beads. This is one way they showed affiliation with their tribe.

CANOES

Indians often used canoes for transportation. Each canoe was made from a single tree. The only tools the Indians used to build canoes were fire, stones or sharp shells. They burned a small area of the tree trunk to make the tree fall down; then they burned one side of the log to hollow it out. Indians used paddles, called oars, to help move the canoe once it was in the water.

INDIANS TODAY

Did you know that there are many American Indians still living in North Carolina? In fact, North Carolina has the largest American Indian population east of the Mississippi River. There are more than 122,000 American Indians living in North Carolina, according to the 2010 US Census. If you use the designation "alone" in combination with the designation "other populations," the US Census totals increase to more than 184,000.

NORTH CAROLINA TRIBES AND ASSOCIATIONS

The state of North Carolina recognizes eight tribes [NCGS 71(A)]. They are: Eastern Band of the Cherokee Nation, Coharie, Haliwa-Saponi, Lumbee, Occaneechi, Meherrin, Sappony and Waccamaw-Siouan. The Eastern Band of the Cherokee Nation is also recognized by the federal government.

Other groups include the Guilford Native American Association, Cumberland County Association for Indian People, Metrolina Native American Association and Triangle Native American Society.

The tribes and associations hold membership on the NC Commission of Indian Affairs as per NCGS 143B-407.

American Indians today live much like the general population in the United States. However, they belong to distinct sovereign tribes that maintain distinct tribal enrollment criteria. American Indian families live in houses and students attend both public and private schools. The Eastern Band of the Cherokee Nation and the Haliwa-Saponi tribes have their own tribally based schools. The Eastern Band of the Cherokee Nation operates a tribal school, and the Haliwa-Saponi tribe operates a Charter School. Both school systems have their own local school boards. Students dress much like any other students and wear jeans, shorts, shirts and shoes. However, there are some restrictions based on which school the students attend. American Indians own and drive cars, go to church and enjoy sports and entertainment like the mainstream population. American Indians are very proud people and very proud of their heritage and ancestors. Indian tribes, associations and other groups hold numerous pow-wows and annual Indian heritage month celebrations to commemorate American Indian culture and heritage.

GIFTS FROM THE INDIANS

American Indians introduced a new culture and many new ways of living, i.e. gifts to white settlers. How many of these "gifts" do you enjoy today? Some of the foods that Indians introduced are: chili, pumpkin, succotash, cornbread, popcorn, potatoes, corn, beans, peas, and

sunflower seeds. They also gave us the Chiclé plant which is used to make chewing gum. Indians taught the settlers the drying process used to preserve foods, such as prunes, raisins and jerky.

American Indians introduced different types of clothing like moccasins and ponchos to the settlers. Chaps that rodeo riders wear today are a form of Indian leather leggings. Indians also gave us cotton that is used to make clothing.

American Indians played forms of what we now call basketball and lacrosse. Sledding was also a sport the Indians enjoyed.

The Indian way of life was to live in harmony with nature. Many of today's organizations are influenced by the arts, crafts and culture of American Indians. Some of these groups are Girl Scouts, Boy Scouts, Campfire Girls and YMCA Indian Guides.

WHAT IS THE PROPER TERM TO USE WHEN REFERING TO THIS POPULATION?

- a. American Indian
- b. Native American Indian
- c. Native American
- d. First Nation's People

It is the policy of the NC Commission of Indian Affairs to use the term American Indian instead of the terms referenced in b-d above. The Commission has adopted this policy because anyone born in the United States, or anyone who becomes a citizen of the United States, is a Native American, but this does not make them an American Indian. American Indians are considered the indigenous people of this continent and have been referenced in many long-standing treaties of the U.S. Government. Furthermore, the Commission notes the fact that there are many state and federal statutes and regulations which refer to the indigenous peoples of the United States as American Indians. Therefore, the Commission has determined that for consistency it is in our best interest to use the term American Indians in our policies, reports, and legislation.

This policy was established by the Commission many years ago to avoid any confusion about to whom we are referring when we refer to the indigenous people of the United States.

For additional information about North Carolina's American Indian population, please visit the NC Commission of Indian Affairs website at: <http://www.doa.nc.gov/cia/>.