The Life of American Indians Before 1492

Paleo-Indians, Northeast Indians, Plain Indians, Southeast Indians and West Indians lived in North America before the Europeans conquered America.

Contrarily to popular belief, civilization did exist in America before the Europeans arrived in 1492. In his book titled *Chronology of Native Americans: The Ultimate Guide to North America’s Indigenous Peoples*, Greg O’Brien asserts that “diverse peoples with different languages and cultures” already inhabited the “New World.” The history of American Indians dates back to tens of thousands of years. Scholars estimate that between 43 million to 65 million indigenous people lived in the Americas before 1492. Meanwhile, the population in North America ranged between 8 and 12 million people.

The Northeast Indians
The Northeast Indians inhabited the present northwest coast of the United States around 5,000 years ago. Some of the tribes which lived in this area were the Iroquois, Delaware, Seneca, Mohican and the Mohawk, although this area was known as the Iroquois nation. Northeast Indians produced a surplus of marine resources, as, for example, whale, salmon and shellfish. This surplus allowed the Indians to occupy the same place for many generations. In addition to marine food, maple trees were an excellent source of syrup and sugar. There were also many fruit trees, like apples and peaches.
The Northeast Indians were able to live in permanent villages due to the various provisions they had available in the northwest coast of the United States. They constructed communal long houses made from cedar wood planks. Also, these Indians were exceptional wood crafters who could build houses, tools, totem poles, seagoing canoes and other essential items. Their societies had hierarchical structures, and they recognized political and religious leaders, commoners and slaves.

The Plains Indians
The Plains Indians inhabited the Great Plains of North America. Among the Indian tribes that occupied this area are the Sioux, Cheyenne, Blackfoot and Pawnee. The Plains Indians’ primary source of nutrition was the buffalo, which they hunted on foot since the Paleo-Indian period. They did not employ the use of the horse until the Europeans arrived in America. These Indians utilized Clovis spearheads to kill buffalos, and also employed the technique of building buffalo drives and corrals in order to drive groups of bison over cliffs. The Head-Smashed-In buffalo jump in Alberta, Canada is the largest and oldest buffalo drive location. The Plains Indians obtained food from the muscles and fat of the buffalo and made shelter and clothes from the hides. Utensils were derived from the bones and organs. Other animals hunted by these tribes were foxes, coyotes, rabbits, wolves, deer and bears.

Plains Indian tribes were nomadic since they had to move constantly in the search for buffalos. The climate in the Great Plains was either hot during the summer or extremely cold during the winter, another factor which contributed to the nomadic life of these tribes. Moreover, the Plain Indians used bows and arrows, which were significant innovations that spread to the plains from the north near 1000.

The Southwest and West Indians
Some Southwest Indian tribes were the Seminole, Choctaw, Cherokee and Creeks. The Tennessee River and the Great Smokey Mountains, situated in the middle of the region inhabited by these Indians, provided them with extensive and fertile soil for effective farming. For that reason, Southwest Indians were the first indigenous people in the North American continent to practice agriculture on a major scale. Their primary source of sustenance was the triad of corn, squash and beans. Nevertheless, the Southwest is an arid location. As a result, Southwest Indians lived close to water sources, such as rivers. If they did not live near water sources, they developed systems to transport water to their agricultural sites. For example, the Hohokam built miles of irrigation canals, which carried rain and river water to their villages.

For their part, the West Indian tribes included the Apache, Pueblo, Shoshoni, Zuni and Hopi among many others. The widely known Navajo tribe lived in this area, called The Four Corners; therefore, the states of Utah, Arizona, Colorado and New Mexico. Game was scarce in the West because this is an exceptionally dry area. Roots, seeds, and acorns were part of the diet of these tribes. West Indians also had to store dried corn in case of years of drought.

Jan 21, 2011 https://suite.io/yolimari-garcia/4vnmq2nn
Her Sources: