

The Americas before Europe

A. First Native Americans – latest consensus among historians has been that humans arrived in North and South America about 40,000-50,000 years ago, by both land and by sea (based on recent archeological findings); were many different peoples who migrated over time, across Pacific Ocean and from Siberia; so there really was no one Native American people, but several (making it easier to conquer); “Indian” is a European term; in fact, we see several nations, cultures, tribes, kin groups.

B. North America – we see basically three different cultural trends in the North America, based on different general regions where these people settled

1. Pacific Northwest

- Fishing, hunting & gathering
- Used coastline, woods, land
- Whaling (harpooning)

2. Southeast of USA

- More sedentary – evidence of permanent villages 3,000 years ago
- Productive agricultural system – corn, squash, beans – could support many people
- Supported hereditary group of leaders
- Primary agricultural traditions

3. Eastern Woodlands (Northeast of USA)

- Semi-nomadic society
- Villages – spring, summer, early fall; in winter – would disperse for hunting
- Hunting, agriculture, gathering
- Division of labor: Females – agricultural work; Males – hunting, trade, war
- Society mostly organized on matrilineal lines
 - With clan chief's death – women chose
 - Major diplomatic terms – when to go to war with neighboring tribe