

LESSON
1

THE EARLY PEOPLES OF NORTH CAROLINA

Objective: To discover how the American Indians in North Carolina lived

American Indians lived and worked in groups called tribes or nations. The divisions of these nations were primarily based on blood relationships and language. Each tribe had its own chief, or leader. Using records of early European explorers and settlers, as well as archaeological evidence, historians have identified more than 30 different American Indian tribes as having lived at one time or another in what is now North Carolina.

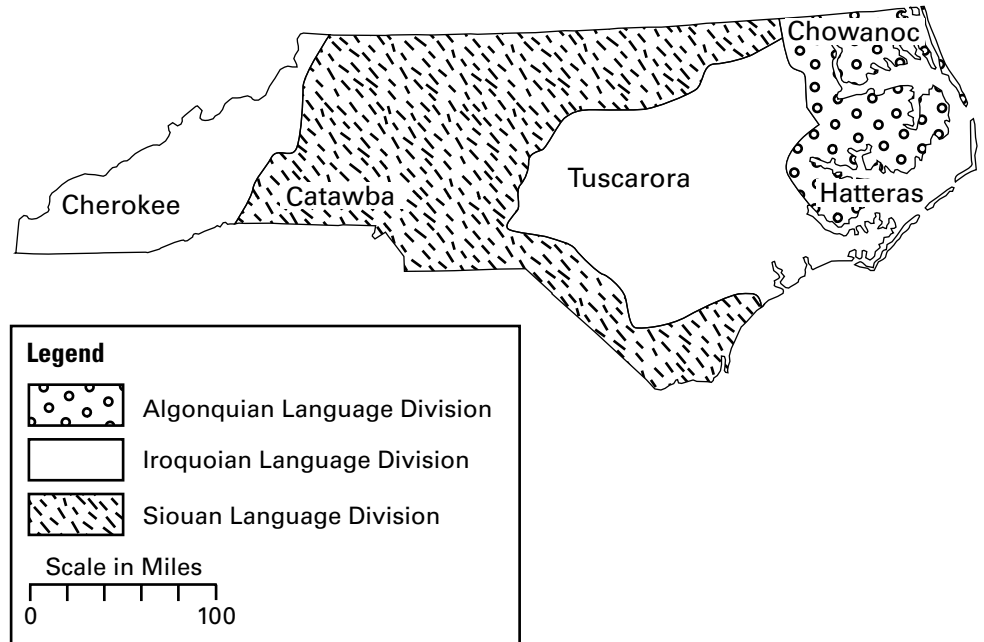
Five American Indian nations have played an important role in North Carolina's history—the Hatteras, the Chowanoc, the Tuscarora, the Catawba, and the Cherokee. The map above shows where these five tribes lived when Europeans first settled in the area of present-day North Carolina.

For the most part, the people of these nations lived in towns for protection as well as for social, economic, and religious reasons. Some towns were surrounded by high pole fences for protection. Other towns were open. Some people lived in huts made of cypress or pine with a curved roof made of bark. Others lived in round tents called wigwams, which were made from animal skins tied or woven together.

Natural beauty was important to many American Indians, and towns tended to be situated in beautiful locations, near rock formations or rivers for example. Perhaps for similar reasons, European colonists often established their towns in areas that were once Indian villages.

North Carolina's American Indian tribes relied on farming for much of their food. They knew the best way to clear fields, how to use different soil types, which seeds to plant, and how to cultivate

AMERICAN INDIAN TRIBES OF NORTH CAROLINA



crops. They planted their seeds in rows, sometimes supporting each plant with a mound of dirt at its base. European settlers later adopted most of these planting techniques after they saw how successful American Indians were at farming. Crops grown by American Indians included corn, squash, pumpkins, beans, tomatoes, green peppers, and sunflowers.

Although the work of providing food was shared by the townspeople, some jobs were performed primarily by either women or men. In many American Indian tribes, women did most of the planting, tending, and harvesting of crops. Women also cooked the food; made clothing, mats, and baskets; and cared for the children. Men cleared the fields and did most of the hunting, fishing, and fighting.

Many American Indians traveled long distances from their towns to trade or to hunt. As a result, Indians developed a good system for marking trails in the woods so that travelers could find their way easily. For example, Indians knew that moss grows only on the north side of trees or rocks, which helped them navigate through unfamiliar territory. They also learned to follow animal tracks to find water.

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In addition to being able to find and mark trails, American Indians were often good at moving quietly and quickly through the woods. This skill coupled with the ability to kill animals swiftly with small handheld weapons made many American Indians highly skilled hunters.

The Hatteras, also known as the Croatoans, were the first American Indians in what is now North Carolina to have contact with European explorers. The Hatteras lived on the Outer Banks, the chain of islands along the coast of North Carolina. Extremely friendly to the English settlers, the Hatteras often aided them in battle. When white settlers came, the Hatteras lived in one town that had about 15 warriors and a total population of less than 90. By 1790 there were only 37 Hatteras Indians remaining in North Carolina.

The Chowanoc lived in the area of the Chowan River in what is now northeastern North Carolina. Archaeological findings suggest that the Chawanoc nation had occupied this region for more than 1,000 years. Like the Hatteras, the Chowanoc also befriended the white settlers and some even adopted English ways of life. The Chowanoc traded with the English settlers and in 1663 signed a treaty of friendship. However, they later went to war against the English and were eventually confined to a reservation.

The Tuscarora lived between the Neuse and the Pamlico Rivers in what is now eastern North Carolina. They were the dominant tribe in the area for many years. Most European settlers regarded the tribe as hostile and warlike, although the Tuscarora did trade furs and other goods with the settlers. In 1711 the Tuscarora, alarmed by the growing number of settlers moving into the region, attacked an English settlement. The result was the Tuscarora War which lasted until 1713. In the end, the English defeated the Tuscarora. The tribe later left North

Carolina and went north, where they joined the Iroquois Confederation.

The Catawba lived further west than the Tuscarora, in the southern Piedmont. Peaceful, friendly farmers, they also traded with the local European settlers, who admired the excellent baskets and pottery that the Catawba made. When a reservation was set aside for the Catawba in 1763, it was placed entirely in South Carolina where the largest portion of the tribe lived. At that time about 1,000 Catawba Indians were left, compared to the estimated 4,600 in 1682.

The Cherokee lived in the far western region of North Carolina. Much of what we know today about the American Indians in this area comes from the Cherokee, although they had little contact with European settlers until after the Revolutionary War. The Cherokee were a powerful nation, but they lived simply, without harming nature. They fought only to exact revenge and to gain respect in their tribe and among other nations. They were not interested in collecting riches, nor did they try to gather extra supplies because they believed it was important to have only what they needed to survive.

The Cherokee used bows, arrows, and spears for hunting and fishing. Men took the primary role in decision making for the tribe, although some women also took part in the decision-making process. In addition, women sometimes participated in the hunt and in war councils. In the event of a divorce, the children, fields, and houses went to the woman.

For the most part, American Indians were eventually driven from North Carolina. Their numbers were greatly reduced by diseases such as small pox and measles, which they caught from contact with Europeans. The Indians who survived were forced to move as a result of war or were either enslaved or moved to reservations.

REVIEW

1. What farming knowledge did American Indians develop and eventually share with white settlers?
2. How did American Indians travel long distances without having roads?
3. **Thinking Critically** Why do you think American Indian women assumed the primary responsibility for farming?
4. **More About The Cherokee** With a small group of your classmates, prepare a presentation about the way the Cherokee lived. Use the information that you learned in this lesson as well as doing your own research. Decide as a group how to include drawings, storytelling, and role playing in your presentation. Each group should take turns presenting their information to the class.