

**archaeological excavation:** a dig to uncover evidence of former civilizations

**hearth:** fireplace

#### DID YOU KNOW?

*The longhouse was built of a wood frame and covered with bark*

## THE AGRICULTURE OF THE IROQUOIS

Agriculture came late to the Iroquoian people. Around 500 CE, they learned how to grow corn from their neighbours to the south. Until this time, the Iroquois had lived in small villages and had led a fairly nomadic existence, often travelling around the region seeking food. The discovery of agriculture eventually led to a rapid increase in both the size of villages and the number of people living in them because people could now stay in one place. This change is well documented by **archaeological excavations** of village sites in southern Ontario.

In the early-agricultural period, between 500 and 1300 CE, villages remained rather small, comprising

about eight longhouses and about 250 people. The whole village covered about one hectare, and was surrounded by a defensive palisade. Fields were still rather small. Each **hearth** was shared by two families.

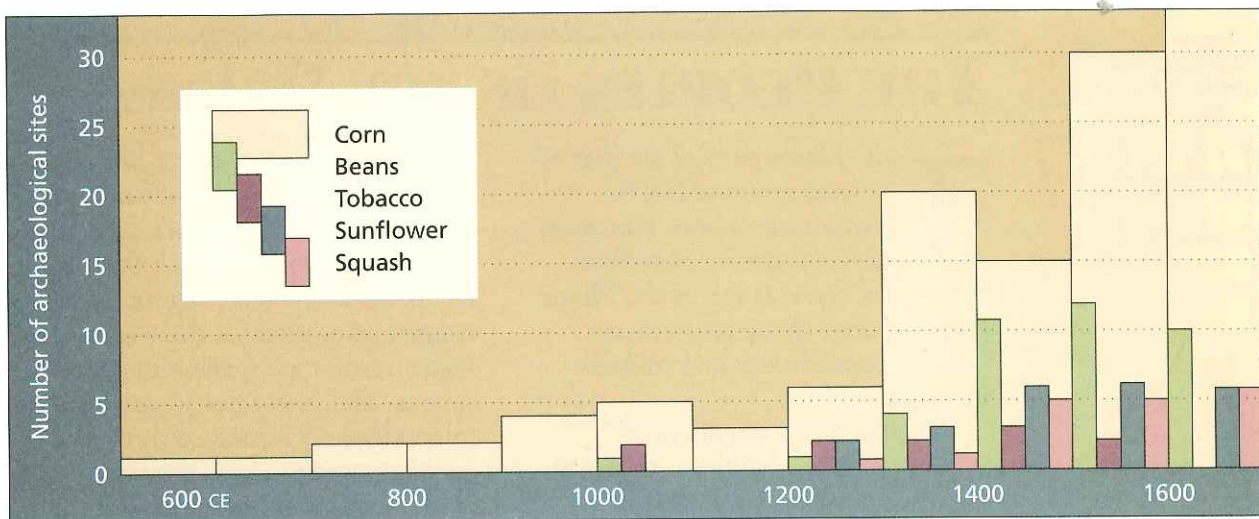
In the middle-agricultural period, between 1300 and 1400, villages grew much larger. New crops—beans, sunflower, and squash—were cultivated, along with the staple crop of corn. The villages had now become towns, each averaging about a dozen longhouses and 1000 people.

By the late-agricultural period (1400 to 1600), some towns covered up to four hectares or more, each with more than 2000 people. These palisaded villages were surrounded by large fields, which provided a stable source of food. Tobacco was a valuable trade item that could be exchanged for non-agricultural products with nations further north, such as the Huron.

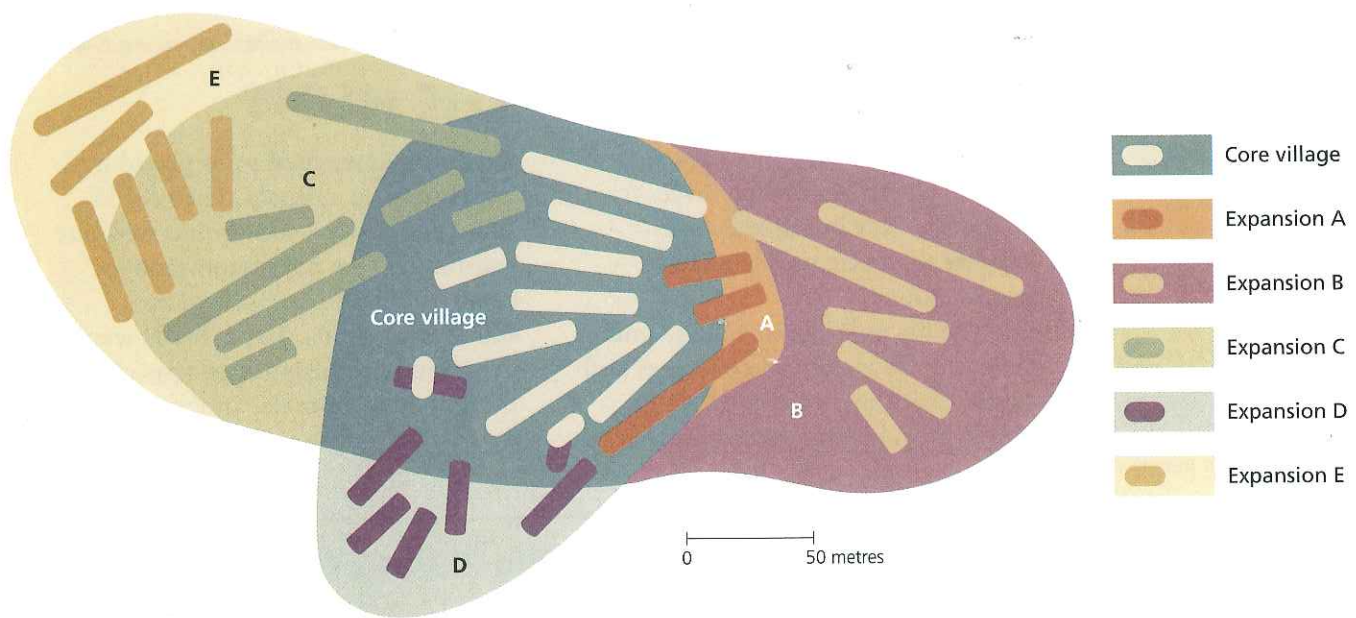
**Figure 7-13** This reconstruction of an early Iroquoian village (around 1000 CE) is located near London, Ontario.







**Figure 7-14** After 1000, Iroquois agriculture grew quickly. According to this this chart, evidence for which crop has been found most frequently by archaeologists?



**Figure 7-15** This diagram shows how an early Iroquoian village could expand into a town. The core village is visible, as well as each addition.

## ACTIVITIES

1. What were the effects of the development of agriculture among the Iroquois? What do you suppose were the advantages of agriculture? What disadvantages do you think may have occurred?
2. How was Iroquois society democratic? Why were women so important to its development?
3. Look again at Figure 7-12. What is symbolized by the image of the hatchets being placed under the roots of a tree? What common expression used today captures this image?
4. Reread the information on the growth of Iroquois villages on page 196 and examine Figure 7-15. To which period does this town belong? How can you tell? Based on the number of longhouses shown here, how many people might occupy this town?



**blind:** an enclosure used to conceal oneself from wildlife for the purpose of hunting

**pound:** hunting by trapping in a pen and killing

**corral:** a pen to trap the bison

## THE PEOPLES OF THE PLAINS

The Plains peoples are part of a huge group of North American Indians who have lived in the Interior Plains. In the past, the cultures of the Plains peoples (those living in northern Canada) depended on one animal—the bison.

The bison, or buffalo, once numbered in the millions. As late as the nineteenth century, it was estimated that 40 million bison lived on the Interior Plains. The Plains people subsisted on bison meat, and made many household and personal items from bison hides, hair, horns, and bones. The organization of Plains society was also affected by the bison. The number of people needed to operate an efficient bison drive—about fifty to a hundred people—became the basic unit of social organization.

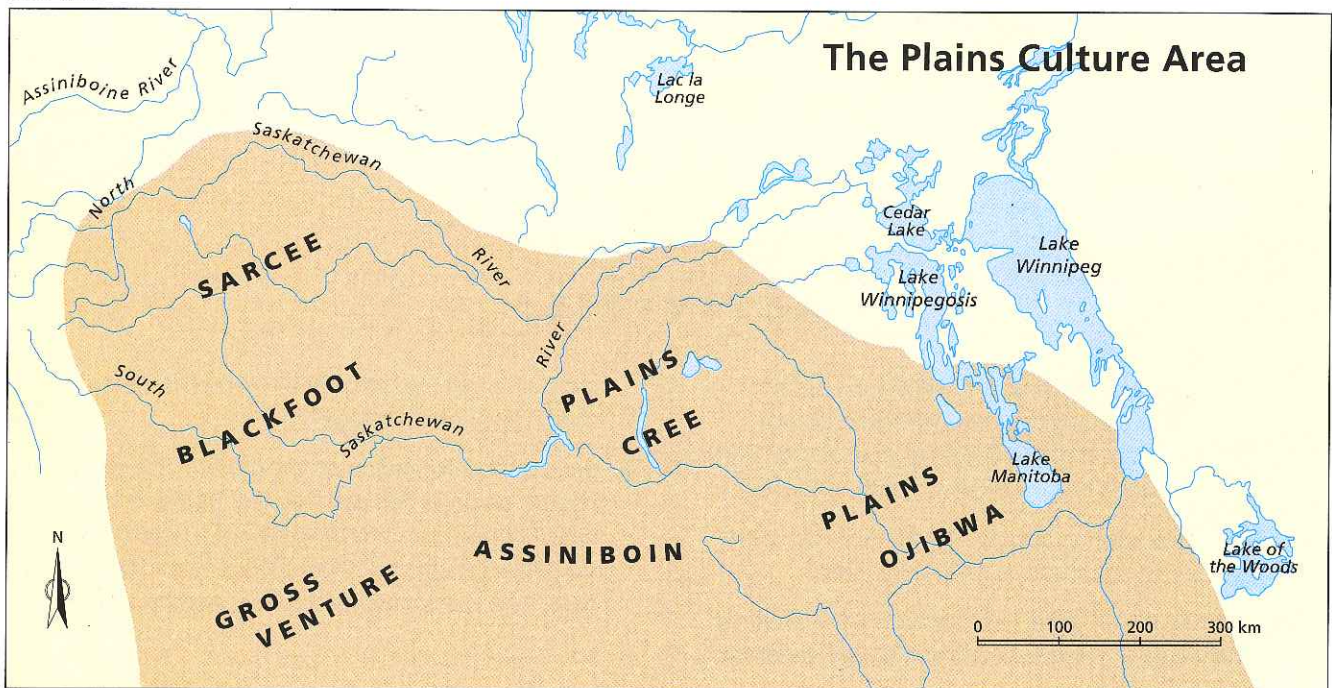
The bison hide was tanned and then used to make tipi coverings and robes. Clothing—tunics, leggings, skirts, breechcloths, and moccasins—

was made from deer skins. Some hides were not stripped of their fur. These were used as winter cloaks and robes that were worn with the fur facing inward, a style that provided natural insulation for the wearer. Bison horns were made into cups and spoons. The intestines were processed into extremely strong cords that could be used to stitch together clothing and tipi coverings, or to make bow strings and bindings for spears and arrows.

## THE HUNT

Bison are considered to be placid but unpredictable animals. They could stampede easily—sometimes without warning. It was not uncommon for bison hunters to be crushed by stampeding herds. These herds were magnificent, consisting of tens of thousands of animals, and would darken the plains as they passed.

Figure 7-16 The people of the Plains





Bison herds were often funnelled towards a location where they could be killed. **Blinds** were constructed, wide at one end and narrowing towards the collection point. The hunters began the process by locating and moving a herd towards the wide end of the buffalo run. Other members of the group—women, children, and old people—then rose up from behind the blinds, shouting and waving their arms, which kept the stampeding herd within the run.

The run would end in one of two manners. The first was the buffalo **pound**, large enough and strong enough to contain part of the herd. As the bison milled around within the pound, hunters would kill them, usually with bows and arrows. Because the bison were fairly placid, they did not seem to notice when other bison were being killed.

## The First Trail Mix?

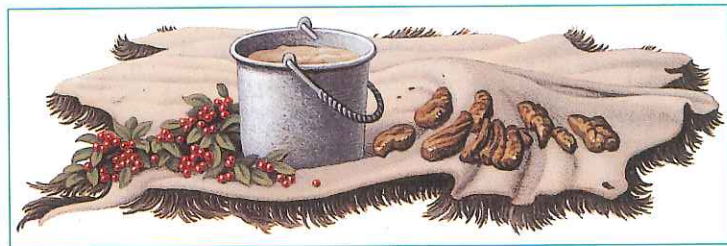
The Plains peoples were nomads who travelled great distances to hunt bison, so they needed to take along food that would not spoil. Because they did not have access to vegetables and nuts, they developed an extremely useful and nutritious trail food, pemmican.

Pemmican has three main ingredients: ground-up bison meat that has been dried, lard, and dried berries. The meat

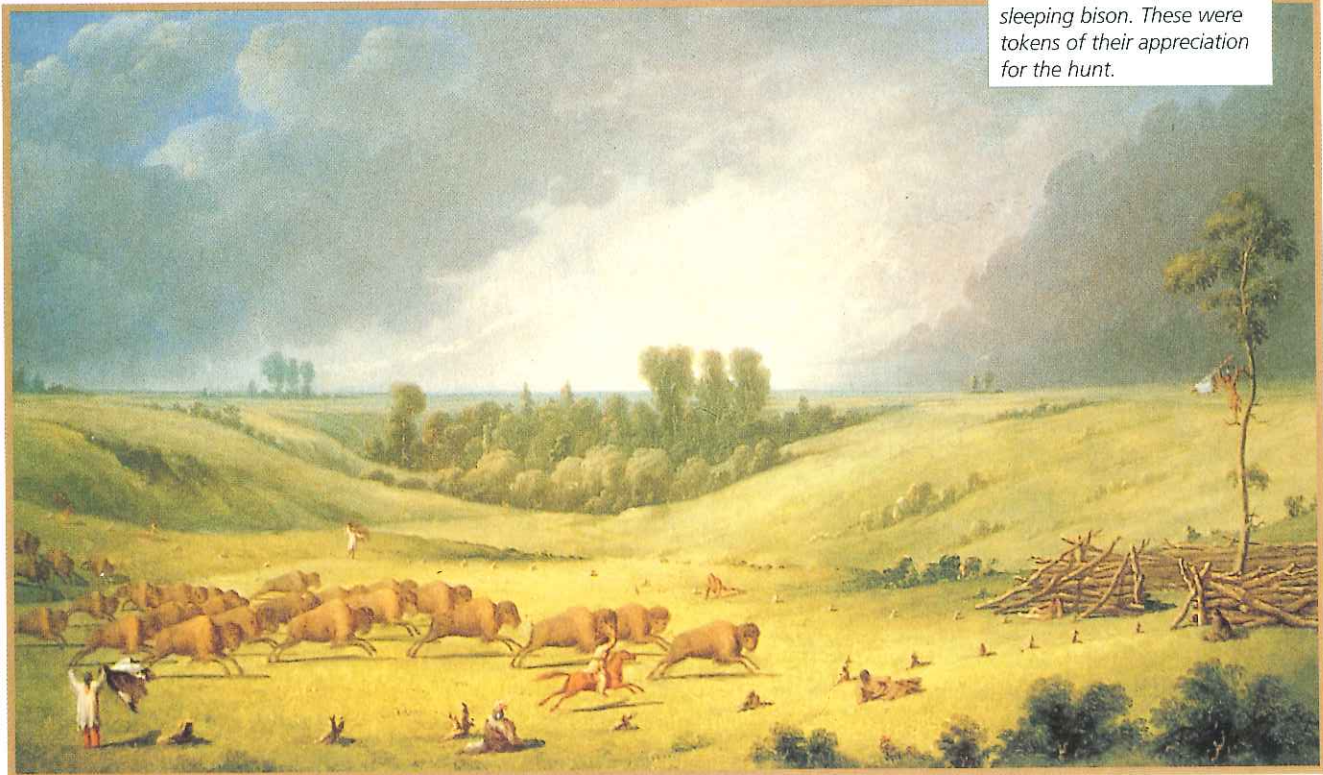
was mixed with the lard and dried berries to make a cake, and then wrapped in bison-hide packages.

Pemmican lasts for months at a time, and is both nutritious and tasty. A small amount can provide a great deal of food energy because of the high protein content.

**Figure 7-17** Pemmican cakes last a long time and provide excellent nutrition.



**Figure 7-18** This painting of a Cree bison pound shows the edge of the **corral** to the right. The corral did not have to be strong. As long as it was interwoven with brush and no light passed through, the bison would think it was a solid wall.



### DID YOU KNOW?

The Blackfoot kept spiral shells that looked like sleeping bison. These were tokens of their appreciation for the hunt.



**jump:** hunting by enticing over a cliff

## A Londoner Reacts to the Bison

William Blackmore was a visitor to the United States from London, England during the mid-nineteenth century. He travelled more than 160 kilometres on the Kansas Pacific Railway. When the train encountered a herd of bison, Blackmore noted that it

... passed through an almost unbroken herd of buffalo. The plains were blackened with them, and more than once the train had to stop to allow an unusually large herd to pass.



### DID YOU KNOW?

While horses had lived in North America for millions of years, they became extinct at the end of the last Ice Age, along with other large mammals. When the Spanish arrived in Mexico, they brought horses with them. By about 1750, the horse had arrived in the northern plains. The horse lightened the work of the bison drive because enough horses could replace a corral.

Plains peoples also used buffalo jumps, or cliffs, to trap and kill buffalo. The run would end at the top of the cliff, and the stampeding herd would simply run over the edge. Many buffalo were killed by the fall, and the survivors were slaughtered by waiting hunters at the bottom. Once

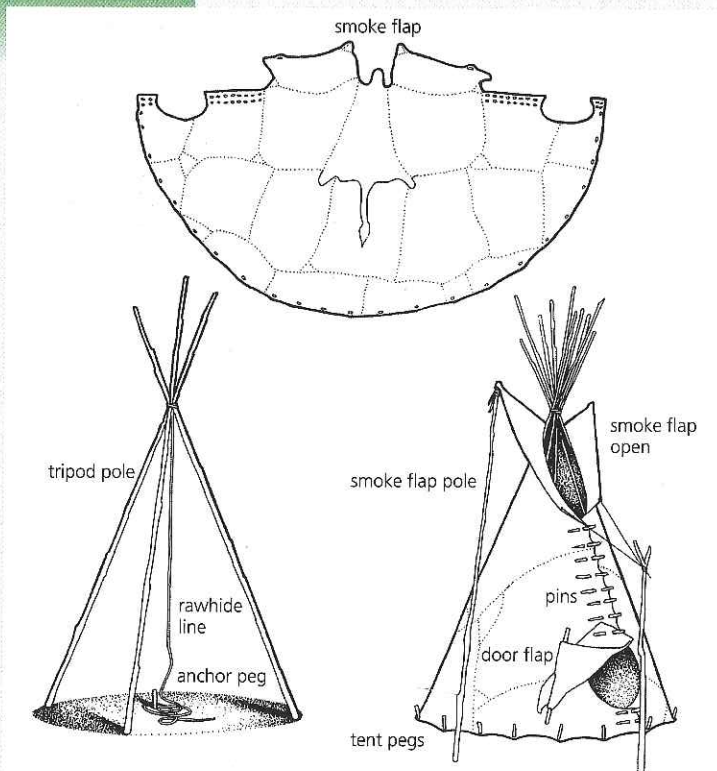
enough animals had been killed, they were butchered and processed. Both buffalo pounds and buffalo jumps seem to have been used for thousands of years. (A recreation of a buffalo jump at the Head-Smashed-In Buffalo Jump Interpretive Centre in Alberta is shown on page 185.)

## The Tipi

The tipi is an ideal house for nomadic peoples. It consists of three or four support poles made of wood, usually birch, because this tree grows straight and has relatively thin trunks. These poles are set up in a pyramid shape, large enough to shelter a single family. This framework is then covered with stitched bison hide. A flap is left open at the top of the tipi to allow for ventilation and the escape of smoke.

The tipi could be set up or taken down in a very short period of time. When a herd of bison was passing, it was often crucial that the band be able to move on very short notice.

**Figure 7-19** This diagram shows the construction of a tipi, beginning with the frame (left). The bison hide is shown top, before being placed on the pole frame.





## PLAINS SPIRITUALITY: THE SUN DANCE

The Sun Dance was the central religious festival of the Plains peoples. Actually, it has nothing to do with worshipping the sun. Among the Plains Cree, it was called the "Thirsting Dance." This is a more accurate term, since the dancers sought visions by subjecting themselves to pain and suffering.

The Sun Dance was held during the summer, when most members of a nation assembled prior to the bison hunt. Sometimes a woman who was admired by everyone was the sponsor of the event. Often she would hold the event after prayers made at a time of crisis had been answered. On other occasions, a man would pledge to hold a Sun Dance, especially if he had returned safely from a war expedition.

While the sponsor **fasted**, a lodge for the ceremony would be built, using a tall centre pole made from a specially chosen cottonwood tree. This pole was decorated with a variety of offerings, such as bison skulls or other ritual objects. Rafters from the centre pole rested on a framework of smaller poles, which made up the walls of the lodge.

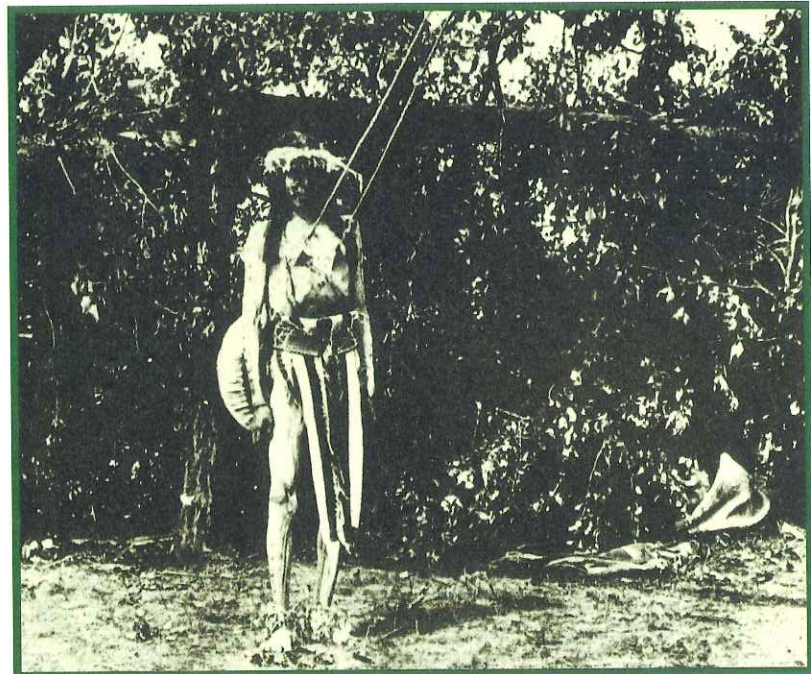
When the lodge was finished, the dances began. Dancers were people

who had made vows. They danced, often without rest, for the several days that the ceremony took. Dancers were not allowed food, drink, or rest until the Sun Dance was over. They danced in place, following the rhythm of chants, keeping their gaze fixed on the top of the centre pole. To prove themselves, young men would have their chests pierced with skewers of bone, which would be attached by ropes to the centre pole. As they danced, they would lean backward until the skewers were ripped out. The scars that resulted were held in high esteem as badges of the ability to withstand pain—essential for a warrior.

**to fast:** to abstain from food

**initiation:** a ceremony during which one gains new status, such as membership in a select group

**Figure 7-20** This young man is performing the Sun Dance as a rite of **initiation**.



## ACTIVITIES

1. How did the bison contribute to the development of Plains culture? Create a poster or write a paragraph that summarizes the information on pages 198–200.
2. In what ways were the Plains peoples adapted to a nomadic lifestyle? How did the horse enhance this lifestyle?
3. Why was the Sun Dance ceremony so important to Plains culture? Why was bravery an important aspect for young men?
4. What other passages from childhood to adulthood can you identify?



**dugout:** made by hollowing out a large log

**pit house:** a home built partly underground

**rafter:** a beam that supports the roof of a home

## THE PEOPLES OF THE PLATEAU

Some archaeologists think that the peoples of the Plateau came from other regions of western Canada and the United States in approximately around 1700 BCE. At this time, people who lived in the more northern forest of present-day British Columbia moved south, while some people who lived on the dry, southern edge of the plateau (in what is now California) moved north. Both groups were probably seeking a more comfortable climate.

Evidence from tools dating back to 500 BCE suggests that the Plateau peoples had **dugout** canoes and well-constructed winter homes. The remains of some of these homes indicate that some were more than 9 metres in diameter.

## HOME ON THE PLATEAU

Unlike the coast of British Columbia, the Plateau has cold winters and a dry climate. In the past, the Native peoples who lived there constructed **pit houses** for protection against the elements. A pit house was an ideal structure for this climate. A circular pit was dug into soft soil near a water supply (usually a creek), to a depth of about 3 metres. Strong **rafters** were then built up over the pit. These were then covered with bark, followed by earth and sod. The finished house was well insulated against winter cold. A hole was left at the peak of the roof, which had two purposes. A notched log was placed at the top of the hole, which became a kind of door, used to enter and leave the house. A hearth was built directly under the hole, which was also used as a smoke hole and for ventilation. The hole could also be closed, and the log could be removed at night or when danger was near. Raised platforms around the outside wall were used as sitting and sleeping areas.

Pit houses were between 6 and 8 metres across, although archaeologists have discovered older houses that measure up to 20 metres

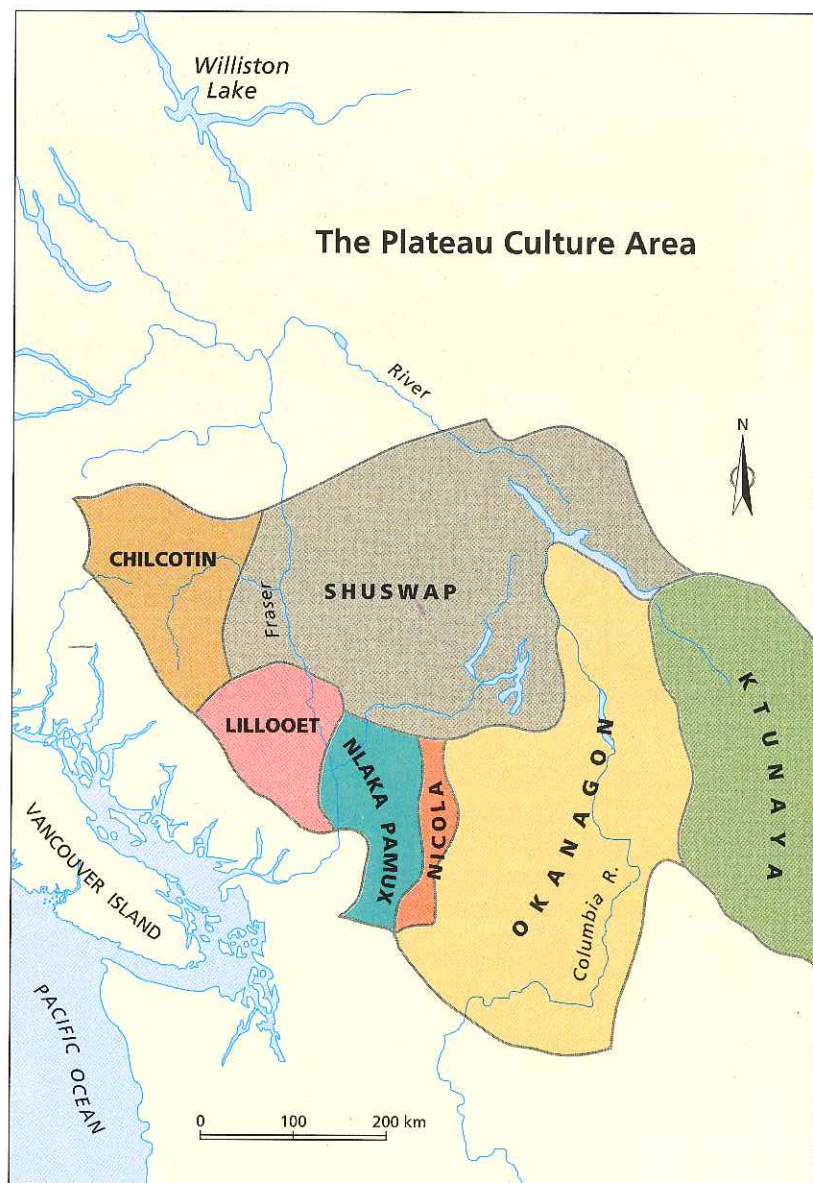


Figure 7-21 The peoples of the Plateau





**Figure 7-22** The remains of this large pit house were found at Keatley Creek, British Columbia. Here, an archaeological dig is in progress. These **semi-subterranean** pit houses were common among the Interior Salish.

in diameter. While the pit house was warm, it was also rather dark and smoky, and the people tended to leave them once spring arrived. Smaller covered pits for food storage were built near the pit house. In spring and summer, people lived in tents as they travelled around their region obtaining food resources.

Pit houses were reused over several winters, but most were abandoned after a few years. Rafters eventually rotted, making the house unsafe. Moreover, the earth that covered the house eventually became infested with insects, rodents, and—worst of all—rattlesnakes. Most pit houses were abandoned before the rafters actually rotted.

## THE IMPORTANCE OF SALMON

Plateau peoples, such as the Interior Salish relied heavily on salmon as a dietary staple. In the fall, people congregated along salmon-bearing rivers and streams to collect and smoke the fish.

Plants were another staple food item. Berries were collected as they ripened, then dried and made into cakes that were eaten during the winter months. **Edible** roots, including the wild onion, wild lily bulbs, and the root of a yellow flower called “balsam root,” were collected during the late summer. These were roasted in earth ovens. Roasting improved the

**semi-subterranean:**  
partially underground  
**edible:** able to be eaten



**landslide:** the rapid downward movement of land on a slope

**to excavate:** to dig an archaeological site

**to disperse:** to scatter across an area

## A “flock” of salmon

The Canadian artist Paul Kane spent much of the 1840s travelling through the West and painting the Native peoples he met. In 1847, he was at Kettle Falls in the interior of British Columbia. He wrote the following:

The salmon ... continue to arrive in almost incredible numbers for nearly two months; in fact, there is one continuous body of them, more resembling a flock of birds than anything else in their extraordinary leap up the falls....The chief told me that he had taken as many as 1700 salmon, weighing on an average of 30 pounds (14 kilograms) each, in the course of one day. Probably the daily average taken in the chief's basket is about 400. The chief distributes the fish thus taken during the season amongst his people, everyone, even to the smallest child, getting an equal share.



### DID YOU KNOW?

The salmon entered the Interior Plateau via the Fraser River. The catastrophe that became known as “Hell’s Gateslide” was a **landslide** that made the Fraser River impassable for most salmon.

flavour of the roots and preserved them for winter use.

Hunting also played an important role in the diet of the Interior Salish. While many types of animals were hunted, deer were the most popular prey. Long fences were constructed that led the deer into snares or into lakes, where they were killed with bows and arrows. Dogs were used to drive the deer into these fenced-off areas.

Like the bison of the Plains, deer were a resource that went beyond food. Deer hide was used to make all manner of clothing, as well as moccasins. The wearing of moccasins indicated a certain status among the Interior Salish. Ordinary people often had to make do with footwear made of salmon skin.

**Excavating** the site at Keatley Creek (see page 203), archaeologists discovered many huge pit houses, indicating a population concentration much larger than had been known historically. This period lasted from 90 CE to about 1000 CE. About 1000 years ago, the entire site was

abandoned. Some archaeologists speculate that a major landslide in the Fraser Canyon drastically reduced the salmon runs, and that the people were forced to **disperse** as a result.

## CULTURES IN CONTACT

The Plateau lies between the culture areas of the Northwest Coast and the Plains. Most of the peoples who lived in this region were Interior Salish with a Plains-style culture as they do today. The Ktunaya lived in the east, as they do today.

Interior Salish people shared many cultural attributes with the Coast Salish, and traded with them extensively. Shells and soapstone were two items that were commonly traded. The Ktunaya were closer to Plains people in their culture. They adopted the Sun Dance as a major ceremonial activity, and they also hunted bison.



## ACTIVITIES

1. How were pit houses an ideal form of housing for the Plateau peoples?
2. Natural disasters can be devastating to people so closely in tune with their environment. With a partner, conduct research in the school library or from other sources to find examples of other such events that affected the lifeways of a Native group. Share your findings with the rest of the class.
3. In what ways were chiefs important to the welfare of the group they led? How could an inefficient chief be damaging to his people?

## THE PEOPLES OF THE NORTHWEST COAST

Archaeological evidence supports the view that the coast of British Columbia has been inhabited for more than 10 000 years. The peoples of the Northwest Coast were part of a distinctive culture that stretched from Oregon to Alaska. Archaeologists have concluded that most of the features of historical nations of the area probably had evolved by about 1500 BCE.

### SOCIAL ORGANIZATION

Northwest Coast peoples were deeply concerned with concepts of inherited **rank** and privilege. Villages had chiefs and nobles who had the right to high-ranking family names, and who controlled access to resource sites. A noble's wealth depended on the ability to manage resources effectively. House sites, salmon-fishing stations, berry patches, and important **stands** of cedar were

**rank:** status, position in a group

**stand:** types of trees covering an area



Figure 7-23 The peoples of the Northwest Coast



**potlatch:** a traditional ceremony practised by many aboriginal peoples of the Pacific Northwest Coast. "Potlatch" is Chinook, meaning "to give." The gifts of a potlatch are payments to those who witness a family ceremony, e.g., a marriage.

**totem pole:** a large red cedar log that is carved and depicts a family history using crests and designs owned by an individual family—primarily a Northwest Coast tradition

**Figure 7-24** These paddles from Bella Coola are also beautifully decorated.



**Figure 7-25** The Haida village of Skidegate

considered private property and were passed on to family members. Groups called "clans" consisted of people who shared a name and descent from a common ancestor. A clan not only held territory, but also possessed ritual dances, songs, and the right to have certain crests representing their clan: the grizzly bear, for example.

Many people in a town were commoners, who lacked any prestige or privileges. They shared in the group's activities and provided the labour needed to develop the village's wealth. Slaves also formed a part of the population. They were either purchased or captured in raids on other nations. They performed menial tasks, and could be sold and given away at **potlatches**, or even killed, if a chief wanted to show that he cared little for his great wealth.

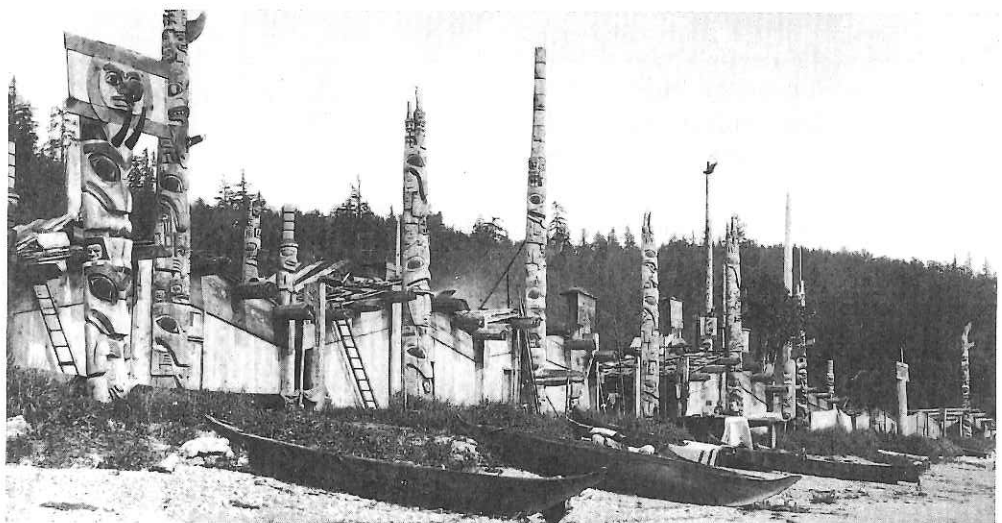
Unlike other nations of the Northwest Coast, the Coast Salish were less rigid in their social organization. Although some people possessed high status, it was possible for skilled individuals to rise from humble origins. Slavery was not common in Coast Salish villages, and slaves could even gain status. There were no real chiefs among the Coast Salish, and political power was held by the leaders of each extended family, which occupied a large winter longhouse.

## ART AND DANCE

The peoples of the Northwest Coast have created some of the most distinctive art in the history of Canada. **Totem poles**, for example, have been carved from the single trunks of western red cedars. Many of these trees could reach a height of 30 metres. Totem poles were used by each clan to tell the story of its origins and deeds. Each clan reckoned descent from a mythical common ancestor, which was represented by a stylized animal or bird, and each clan had the right to use specific images on their totem poles.

Ritual dances were another feature of Northwest Coast aboriginal life. Dances were important because they reminded people of the importance of each clan, and communicated the legends of each clan. Dancers wore elaborate costumes, including wooden cedar masks. Masks were worn to represent characters in legends. Each mask was elaborately carved and decorated, and some masks were ingeniously hinged so that the dancer could represent the ability of some bird, animal, or mythical being.

Both totem poles and ritual dancing remain features of Northwest Coast aboriginal life today.





## HOMES AND CANOES

Cedar was used in the construction of houses and canoes. Northwest Coast big houses were extremely large, and lasted for years. They were constructed by first raising a strong frame of dressed cedar logs, which were then faced with cedar planks. The support poles of longhouses were usually carved with images important to the clan that occupied them.

Northwest Coast canoes were made from single cedar logs, and were extremely seaworthy. The waters of this part of Canada can be very stormy, especially in winter, yet the larger canoes were designed for journeys of hundreds of kilometres, or for the hunting of whales off the coast. The largest canoes were more than 20 metres long and could carry more than fifty persons. Smaller canoes were used by individuals for both fishing and as a means of visiting nearby villages.



Figure 7-26 Ritual dancing is still a feature of Northwest Coast aboriginal life.

## THE POTLATCH

Status and wealth were extremely important to Northwest Coast aboriginal peoples. The **potlatch** was the outward sign of a noble's status. Nobles hosted potlatches whenever a major event took place, such as the birth of an heir, the death of a chief, or

Figure 7-27 As you can see, the interior of this Northwest Coast big house is very large. How can you tell that salmon and cedar were extremely important?





### DID YOU KNOW?

The Northwest Coast “bent-wood cedar box” was so well made it was watertight. These boxes were often used as storage containers. Large boxes were also used as cooking vessels. Each box was decorated with images of a clan’s symbolic crests.



Figure 7–28 A bent-wood cedar box

the raising of a new house or totem pole. In so-called “rivalry potlatches,” other nobles and their followers were invited from nearby or even distant villages. They were treated to an elaborate feast and ceremonial dances. At the end of the potlatch, the host would demonstrate his wealth and status by giving away large amounts of his personal possessions—canoes, blankets, food, ceremonial coppers (shield-shaped copper plaques), boxes, and even slaves. In some cases, the host noble would even **ceremonially** destroy property.

Although the purpose of the potlatch was public recognition of a noble’s status, it was also a way of redistributing wealth and food. While a noble might be temporarily made poor after a potlatch, he could gain much of his wealth back when his guests held their own potlatch and invited him as guest. In fact, in rivalry potlatches this return invitation was necessary in order to avoid shame.

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## FOOD BY THE SEASON

The Northwest Coast peoples are unusual in that they enjoyed an extremely complex society without developing agriculture. This was due to the nature of the environment in which they lived—food, in great variety, was readily available.

However, because food had to be collected from different sites and at different times of the year, it was necessary for the peoples of the Northwest Coast to move around their area. This movement was called a “seasonal round.” Depending on the time of year, **habitations** could be small and mobile, or they could be large and fixed.

An area for which the seasonal round is well known is the lower mainland of British Columbia. This

was one of the richest areas for animal and plant life on the entire Northwest Coast. It supported, at various times of the year, a pre-European-contact population of over 30 000 people—one of the densest population **concentrations** in all of North America.

The season began in the winter months. At this time of year, the various nations of southwestern British Columbia lived in large, permanent villages. This was a time of relatively little hunting-and-gathering activity, and people spent their time making and repairing tools, and telling tales within their own groups. There were major winter villages in the lower mainland. These had been occupied in some cases for thousands of years, and they were very large. Archaeological investigations of the Musqueam village indicate that it stretched nearly 2 kilometres along the north bank of the Fraser River and was home to at least a thousand people. Two other villages, Kwantlen and Tsawassen, were home to at least as many people. All these villages were part of the larger Coast Salish nation, which also had villages across the Strait of Georgia and upriver along the Fraser. Another large winter village at the head of Howe Sound was occupied by the Squamish nation.

Early spring was a time when stored supplies of food were beginning to run out, and the larger villages began to slowly break up as family or house groups began to move around the area to collect what food was available. One major source of winter food was shellfish, especially mussels, clams, and oysters. Enormous deposits of these shells, called **middens**, have been found throughout the area.

By early summer, the peoples of the area had established camps all over the region. These were bases for the collection of foodstuffs, including salmon and shellfish, birds, and early-ripening plant foods, such as salmonberries and huckleberries.

**ceremonially:** with dignity, observing the occasion

**habitation:** a place to stay

**concentration:** the measure of how many people there are relative to the space they occupy

**midden:** a heap of garbage, shells, or other debris



Many Squamish people moved south and occupied camps along the northern shores of Burrard Inlet and in what is now Stanley Park. The Musqueam occupied sites along the shores of English Bay and Lulu Island. Groups of Cowichan and Nanaimo came across the Strait of Georgia and lived in fairly large villages on Lulu Island and on the Fraser River. The Cowichan village on Lulu Island was at least a kilometre long.

Late summer to early fall is the period when the major salmon run takes place on the Fraser River. The numbers of fish moving up the Strait of Georgia and then up the Fraser was so large that people were able to collect enough food to last them for most of the winter months. Early summer camps were largely abandoned as people from nearly all groups moved up the Fraser to catch fish near the mouth of the Fraser Canyon. Fish caught were dried on huge racks, and the dried fish was then carried back to winter camps. In 1828, the chief trader at Ft. Langley recorded 550 Cowichan canoes and 200 Squamish canoes passing downriver at the conclusion of this season. In the late autumn, people also collected the Indian potato from the marshes of the lower Fraser. By the late autumn, most people were back in their winter villages.



**Figure 7-29** Salmon drying on large racks late in the summer season

Despite the fact that the people belonged to several different villages or nations, they often cooperated with each other. Food collection sites belonged to people from specific villages or nations, and these groups had the right to use these sites as opposed to members of different families. Because Salish people had a **bilateral kinship** pattern, it was possible for people to marry outside their own group, and this meant that individuals could enjoy ownership rights to many different sites. Bilateral kinship also meant that individuals could choose to spend the winter in the villages of relatives, as opposed to the village they normally lived in. So while a village could be primarily, for example, of the Musqueam, Cowichan or Squamish families could also spend the winter there.

**bilateral kinship:** ancestry is reckoned through the mother's and father's families

## ACTIVITIES

1. Imagine you are a member of an important family and you have been chosen to make a totem pole that shows major events in your family's history. What images would you select? How would you arrange them?
2. How did the Coast Salish differ from other Native peoples of the Northwest Coast?
3. How did the seasonal round of the Plateau peoples differ from that of peoples of the Northwest Coast? How were they similar?
4. In 1914, Edward Curtis made a film called *In the Land of the War Canoes*. If possible, have your teacher screen this film for the class. After watching the film, discuss whether it is an accurate depiction of Northwest Coast life. Can you detect any bias in the film?



## CONCLUSION

Canada has been home to a huge number of Native communities for thousands of years. In the past, some of these societies were loosely organized and scattered over a vast territory. Others were compact and centralized.

The peoples of the Plains, for example, hunted bison on foot, and moved all their worldly goods from place to place according to the rhythm of the hunt. On the other hand, the Iroquois of the Eastern Woodlands built large, permanent towns and farms after they acquired agriculture around 500 CE. Social life also varied tremendously. Inuit society was based on life-long trading partnerships

because no one could survive without hides and oil. Among the coastal peoples of the Northwest, traditions of inherited rank and privilege meant that their societies emphasized wealth, power, and earthly possessions. Yet the Northwest Coast peoples also had a unique way of redistributing wealth, known as the “potlatch” (which no European would have understood).

It is dangerous to categorize—or to make generalizations about—the cultural life of the Native peoples of Canada. Although you have examined five representative groups in this chapter, they remain five societies, each with their own characteristics and traditions.

## SUMMARY ACTIVITIES

1. Prepare an organizer that will help you understand the similarities and differences which exist among the Native peoples of Canada.
2. Have your teacher form the class into groups. Each group should select a nation from one of the major Native culture areas of Canada. Using the information provided here as a base, and after conducting further

research in your school library or from other sources, prepare a report on aspects of that nation's culture. Share your findings with the rest of the class.

3. Visit the cultural centre of a local aboriginal group. List any new information you learned from this visit.

## ON YOUR OWN

1. Invite a member of a local aboriginal group to visit your class and to recount a legend or myth that explains the history of his or her people.
2. The following names are Native in origin. Find out more about their origin and what they meant in the original language.

Canada	Quebec	Ontario	Saskatchewan
Yukon	Saguenay	Winnipeg	
Moose Jaw	Kamloops	Kelowna	