



3rd Grade  
Unit 1: Interrelationships: Communities and their  
Environments

Essential Question #5: In what ways does community and environment shape human culture?

**Lesson Title:** Introduction to Early Indigenous American Cultures

**SS Standard II, Objective 2**

**Implementation Time:** 45 minutes

**Resources Needed:** “The First Americans” resource sheet (attached); KWL Inventory; “The First Americans” Map; United States wall map

**Materials Needed:** markers/colored pencils/crayons

**Procedure:**

1. As a whole class, complete the K and W on the KWL inventory. Allow students to share their background knowledge of American Indians and to be inquisitive about what they would like to know. This informal pre-assessment will help inform your instruction and will reveal how much your students already know about the topic.
2. Have students fold a blank piece of paper twice – once vertically and once horizontally- so that when unfolded, they have four squares. Instruct students to number the squares 1-5 (five will be on the back of the paper). Read “The First Americans” out loud while students listen. Pause after each paragraph to ask and answer questions and then have students quickly draw a picture and write a short caption that helps them visualize and remember the main ideas. The picture and caption for the first paragraph should be drawn in box number one, the second in box number two, and so on. **If time permits**, allow students to color their pictures.
3. Project a copy of the “First Americans Map.” Tell students that you will be talking about early indigenous cultures from different regions of North America. Explain that where people live determines how they live and that they will be exploring different indigenous communities from the following different regions: Northeast Woodlands, Southeast Woodlands, Plains, Southwest, Northwest Coast, and Far North. Point out the different regions on the map. Orient students to the location of the regions by pointing out familiar features such as: Utah, Mexico, the oceans, Great Lakes, mountains, rivers, California, Alaska, Canada, etc. Explain that these places are not

labeled on the map because they haven't always existed as we know them today. Ask students: *Which group lived where Utah is today? Which group lived in the largest area? The smallest?*



**Assessment:**

As a whole class, begin completing the “L” (what I learned) section of the KWL inventory. Have students write a three-sentence summary statement about something new they learned during this lesson.

# K-W-L Inventory



What I **K**now

What I **W**ant to Know

What I **L**earned



## The First Americans

Several million people lived in North America before the arrival of the Europeans. These people believed that the land was for everyone to use and share. Some of the people were hunters and others were farmers. The hunters moved across the land killing only the animals they needed for food, tools, clothing, and shelter.

There were hundreds of different American Indian tribes in North America before Christopher Columbus and other explorers arrived. Christopher Columbus called all the tribes “Indians” even though the people he referred to were scattered all over the continent, spoke different languages, and had different cultures.

Europeans brought many sicknesses with them to North America that American Indians had never seen. Many American Indian people died as a result. Europeans also brought different ideas about the land – they wanted to take over the land and claim it as their own. Even though some American Indians helped Europeans learn to survive in a place that was new and unfamiliar to them, some Europeans wanted American Indians to change the way they lived. They wanted American Indians to become more like Europeans.

When the United States became its own independent nation, the government started moving American Indian tribes off their land and giving it to white settlers. By the late 1800s, most American Indian tribes were forced to live on reservations.

Today there are hundreds of American Indian reservations located in thirty-four states. Many American Indians live on these reservations, but many choose to live in cities, towns, and communities just like ours. American Indian tribes hold onto many of their tribal customs and teach them to their children.

# The First Americans

