

CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE AMERICAN INDIAN

Many students, as well as adults, do not know of the many contributions made by the American Indian. The contributions cover a wide spectrum of American culture. It is most important that children be made aware of such information not only to erase generalizations, but also to make them aware of the importance of the Native American in the historical and contemporary settling of America.

FOODS

Corn
Popcorn
Wild rice
Bean (14 varieties)
Squash
Pumpkins
Cranberries
Maple sugar and syrup
Potatoes (white and sweet)
Turkeys
Clam bakes
Pemmican
Jerky
Tomatoes
Pineapples
Avocado
Tapioca (Manioc)
Chocolate (Cacao)
Peanuts
Chewing gum

PRODUCTS

Canoe
Toboggan
Snow shoes
Moccasins
Tipi
Kayak
Fringed buckskin jacket
Coonskin caps
Mukluks
Lacrosse
Cradle boards (baby carriers)
Tomahawk
Tobacco
Cigars
Pipe smoking
Cotton
Rubber
Quinine
Cocaine

60% Over half of the present world's food supply comes from the American Indians' agriculture, primarily consisting of corn and the so-called "Irish" potatoes. Thousands of American Indian names dot our maps in states, cities, counties, lakes, mountains and rivers, and hundreds of Indian names are used as trade names for modern manufactured products, etc.

Indian art, designs and styles have strongly influenced modern design, architecture and music.

Modern youth groups such as Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, Campfire Girls and the YMCA Indian Guides, all include programs based largely on Indian lore, arts and crafts, character building and outdoor campcraft and living.

Past American Indian civilizations (Inca, Mayan and Aztec) plus the Iroquois Confederacy have influenced our very form of democratic government, the Iroquois Confederacy being copied by Benjamin Franklin when he drafted our Federation of States. Truly, we may state our form of government is "American."

Besides the recognized contributions such as corn, squash, etc., the most important contribution is the Indian's value system. They placed emphasis and importance on: Respect for Mother Earth (Ecology), Respect for Fellow Man (No Prejudice), Respect for the Great Spirit (God), generosity, sharing (no material acquisitions), honest leadership selection, bravery, courage, respect for the aged, family tradition, no religious animosity, no major wars (no Indian nation destroyed another), also there were thousands of years of peace (before 1492); no tranquilizers, drugs, alcohol, ulcers, no poor, no rich, no insane asylums, no jails, prisons, lawyers, taxes, borders or boundaries, no germ warfare (smallpox infected blankets), and no complete annihilation weapons (Hydrogen bomb).

The Native American has influenced many areas of the American way of life, from art and music, to law and government. Some other areas are:

1. Indians served as guides in the early exploration of this hemisphere. Their trails became the roads and railroads over which the settlers advanced in search of new homes.
2. The log cabin was an adaptation of the Indian log or longhouse.
3. Sites of Indian villages advantageously located on waterways and trails became trading posts, then villages. Later they became the modern cities of Chicago, Detroit, St. Louis, Kansas City, Pittsburgh, Pocatello and countless others.
4. Fur traders visited Indian villages and held rendezvous. Their reports encouraged the land hungry and adventurous people to move farther and farther inland.
5. The Indians assisted the English, French, Spanish and peoples of other European countries in the struggle control of the new country.
6. The Indian has been immortalized in song, painting, art and sculpture.
7. Symbols such as the totem pole, thunderbird, sun and tepee, as well as the Indian's love for color have had prominent place in developing modern design.
8. Indian knowledge of areas where fine clays, used in making pottery and china, has been passed to the white man and this was the beginning of the manufacturing of fine porcelain ware.
9. Indians cultivated and developed many plants that are very important in the world today. Some of them: white and sweet potatoes, corn, beans, tobacco, chocolate, peanuts, cotton, rubber and gum. Plants were used for dyes, medicines, soap, clothes, shelters and baskets.
10. Many places in the United States have names of Indian origin. Approximately half of our states have Indian names.
11. Some Idaho names of Indian origin include: Pocatello, Tendoy, Bannock, Camas, Lemhi, Shoshone; Inka, Kamiah, Potlatch, Nez Perce, Oneida and Minidoka.
12. Countless Indian words have become a part of the English language. Some sample words are: barbecue, cannibal, caribou, chipmunk, chocolate, cougar, hammock, hurricane, mahogany, moose, opossum, potato, skunk, squash, toboggan and woodchuck.
13. Games and recreational activities developed by Indians include: canoeing, tobogganing, snowshoeing, LaCrosse, cat's cradle and bull roar.
14. Indians also have contributed a great deal to farming methods. The white settlers in colonial America might have starved if they had not copied Indian farming methods. At least one tribe, the Pima, had a well-developed irrigation system.
15. Benjamin Franklin said that our idea of the federal government, in which certain powers are conferred on central government, and all other powers reserved to the states, was borrowed from the system of government of the Iroquoian League.