

## Paleo-Indians

Archaeologists call the time just after people first came to North America the Paleo-Indian period. During the Paleo-Indian period, all the people in North America were **nomads** and got their food by hunting and gathering. Some of these people stayed near the Bering Land Bridge in Alaska.

Other people gradually moved south and east, looking for warmer weather. They hunted the **mammoth** as they went, and then as the mammoth became **extinct** they began to hunt bison instead.



[www.coloradohempproject.com](http://www.coloradohempproject.com)



[beartrust.org](http://beartrust.org)

They used spears and **atlatls** to hunt.



[www.texasbeyondhistory.net](http://www.texasbeyondhistory.net)

**Unit 1 A New World Rising**  
Grade 5 Social Studies/ELA Curriculum  
Lesson 1: Early Peoples of the Americas: Migration Routes and Settlement

Eventually some people reached Central America and then South America, while other people reached the east coast of North America. By that time, maybe about 8,000 BC, people in North America had developed different languages, and couldn't understand each other when they spoke.

Although they were here longer than all other following cultures combined, they left very little records of their lives. Archeologists have very little to go by as to the Paleo Indians beliefs, religion, language, celebrations, ceremonies, and culture such as dance and family relationships. They died out about 9,000 years ago, taking with them most of their secrets

Although little is known about the culture of the Paleo Indians, or Clovis people as they are sometimes called, archeologists have formulated a few ideas on their lives. They traveled in tribes of between 20 and 50 people, carrying their belongings on their back. They often sought shelter in caves, but occasionally built crude shelters from branches and animal skin. They decided where to camp depending on where the animals were.



[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Clovis\\_point](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Clovis_point)

When they first began hunting, they probably trapped smaller animals. But they are known for inventing spears with stone points that could be thrown by using an atlatl. Because archeologists have found stone points in different areas of the continent, it is believed that the different bands were able to communicate, perhaps even trade with each other. They named these stone points Clovis points after the city of Clovis, New Mexico, where examples were first found in 1929.

A tribe of Paleo Indians may have even worked together to herd larger game over a cliff, killing it for food. In addition to the game they trapped or killed, the Paleo Indians also ate seeds, fruits, roots, and possibly even insects. They used animal skin and plants for clothing.

As Paleo- Indian groups adapted to local environments, regionally different ways of life began to appear throughout the Americas. Each geographic area determined a different culture. Paleo-Indians living in desert country collected wild plant foods because game animals were scarce. Bison hunting was found on the Great Plains, where large herds of the animals lived. People living in forests hunted woodland game animals such as deer, while those near rivers and lakes fished and hunted waterfowl. Along the Atlantic and Pacific coasts, Paleo-Indians fished and gathered shellfish. In time, agriculture spread to North America from Mesoamerica, where cultivation of food crops began as early as 7,000 years ago, and farming cultures appeared in the southwestern and eastern regions.