

Native Americans of the West



Northwest Coast

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- Mountainous area with many offshore islands and dense forests.
 - Wet climate with mild winters and cool summers.

Abundant Resources

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- Berries, roots and other plants were plentiful.
 - Forests had beavers, bears, deer and elk.
 - Oceans, river and streams had salmon, halibut and cod.
 - Salmon became their most important food.

The Salmon Run

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- Salmon Run- salmon would swim against the flow of freshwater rivers to lay their eggs.
 - During a salmon run, a family could catch over 1,000 pounds of fish.
 - Most fish was dried and stored for meals throughout the year.

The Tlingit

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- Traded their surplus with other people.
 - Trade helped make them wealthy people.
 - Their villages hugged the water's edges.
 - They built wooden plank houses large enough for several families.

Technology & Potlatches

- Built dams and traps for catching salmon.
- Large canoes that could travel long distances.
- Important events were celebrated with a potlatch.
 - Potlatches are feasts at which guests receive gifts.

Totem Poles

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- Totem poles were placed in front of the community house to decorate it and mark it as a place of celebration or meeting.
 - Designs carved into totems are symbols or tell stories.
 - The poles also display family crests, which are symbols that represent a particular family.

Arrival of Europeans

- In 1867, the U.S. purchased Alaska from Russia.
- Settlers arrived and the Tlingit found it hard to keep their way of life
- America forced the Northwest peoples to move away from the ocean.
- The U.S. government passed the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act in 1971.
 - Returned control of Native American homelands in Alaska.

Comprehension Questions

1. How did the peoples of the Northwest Coast live without farming?
2. How did the Tlingit use technology to improve their lives?
3. What effect did the arrival of Europeans have on the way of life of the Tlingit?
4. What effect did the 1971 Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act have on people in the area?

