



Native Americans and Their Land

The Journey of Adaptation

How did Native Americans adapt to different environments in North America?



Adaptation

Changing your way of life to survive and thrive in a new place.



Environment

Everything that surrounds you—sunlight, air, water, land, animals, insects, and plants.

Two Ways of Knowing: How Did the First People Arrive?



1. Origin Stories

Sacred history passed down through generations.



2. Scientific Evidence

Geographic and archaeological tracking of migration.

The Hopi Story: Climbing to the Surface

4. The Dispersal:

Once above ground, they traveled North, South, East, and West to find good land to grow crops.

3. The Climb: The chief's advisors grew sturdy plants like ladders, guiding the people to the surface.

2. The Scout: A mockingbird was sent through a hole in the crust, reporting a different world above.

1. The Darkness: Early people lived happily inside the Earth until it became too crowded.

Following the Megafauna Across the Ice

When: At least 15,000 years ago during the last Ice Age.

Where: Across a frozen land bridge connecting Siberia (Asia) to North America.

Why: Siberian hunters were tracking big game—massive mammoths, bison, and caribou—following their food source into a completely undiscovered world.



The Natural Resource Toolkit



What is a Natural Resource?

The raw building blocks of survival provided by the Earth. Before grocery stores and hardware shops, early groups had to find every single thing they needed to eat, wear, and build directly from the soil, water, and wildlife around them.

The Four Great Environments

 Grasslands			 Deserts		
Climate	Resources	Survival Challenge	Climate	Resources	Survival Challenge
 Mountains			 Arctic Ice Fields		
Climate	Resources	Survival Challenge	Climate	Resources	Survival Challenge

Grasslands & Mountains



Grasslands

Moderate rain supports vast oceans of short and tall grasses. Rich soil allows for farming, while the plains support massive herds of large animals like bison.



Mountains

High elevation brings cold rain and deep snow. Dense forests of pine, fir, and spruce grow at the base, but the extreme, barren heights support little to no plant life.

Deserts & The Arctic



Deserts

Defined by extreme heat and almost no rain. Survival requires intense ingenuity, such as digging deep wells and irrigation ditches just to find drinking water and raise crops.



Arctic Ice Fields

Located near the North Pole. Huge sheets of ice cover frozen land almost all year. Plant life is nearly nonexistent; survival relies entirely on harvesting the freezing sea.

The Ultimate Test: The Inuit of the Arctic

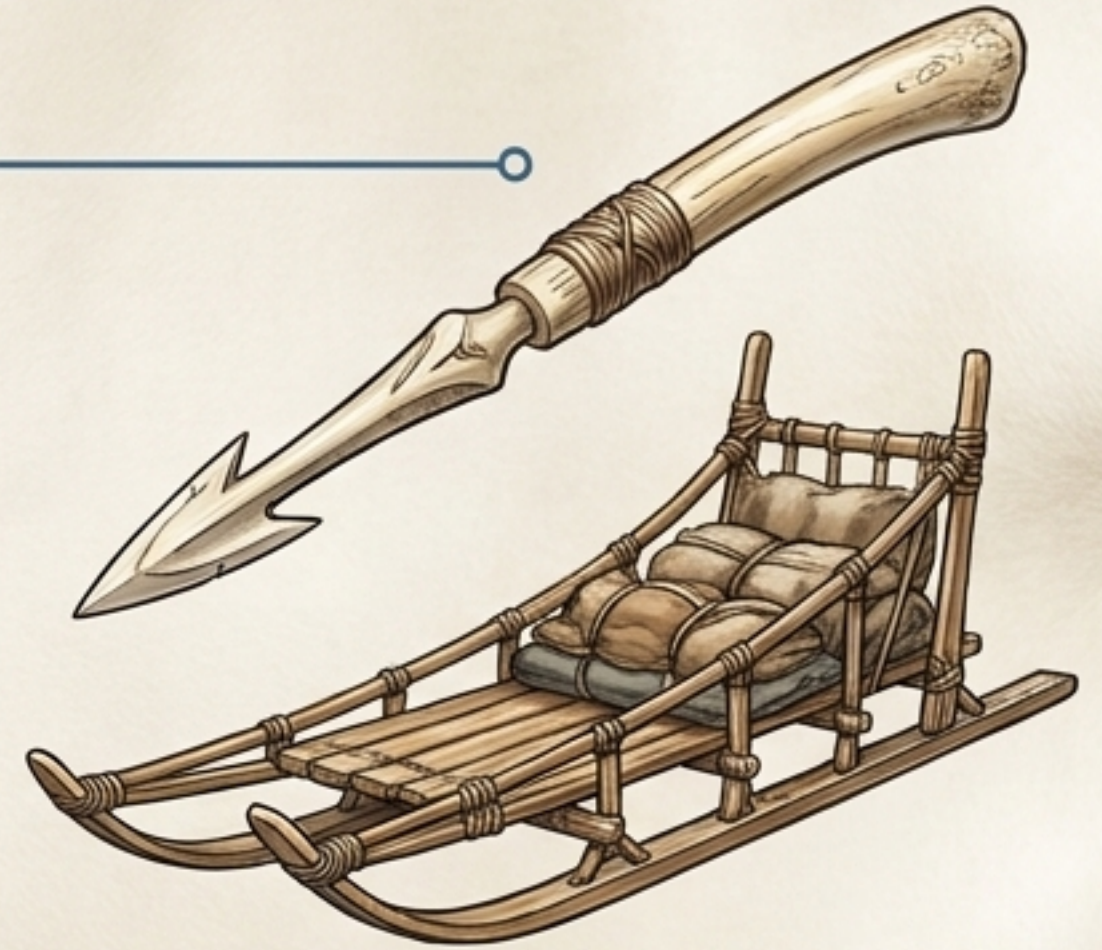


How do you survive when the land provides no wood, no crops, and is frozen solid year-round?

Mastering the Ice: Gear & Hunting



Driftwood & Bone → Snow Goggles
Narrow slits protect eyes from the blinding glare of sun on ice.



Bone & Sinew → Harpoons & Dogsleds
Carved weapons for hunting whales, and sleds for traversing the frozen tundra.



Sealskins → Harpoon Floats
Skins filled with air, attached to spears to tire out diving whales and walruses.

Mastering the Ice: Seasonal Shelter



Summer Tents

Built from driftwood, massive whale bones, and waterproof seal or caribou skins.



Winter Igloos

When the skins and wood are gone, homes are engineered entirely from snow and ice, using the environment's cold to trap body heat inside.

The Concept of Zero Waste

True adaptation means wasting nothing and respecting everything.

Bones: Carved into vital tools, needles, and weapon frames.



Recording the Journey



History Painted on Hide

Belted written words, edictalico, survival, and great historical events were recorded through art, ceremony, and memory. The Lakota people of the Great Plains used pictographs painted directly onto bison hides to keep their history alive.



Ingenuity and Survival

How did Native Americans adapt?

By deeply observing the climate, mastering the specific natural resources around them, and applying incredible human ingenuity to waste nothing.

Your Turn: Look around. What natural resources are in your environment right now, and how do you rely on them every single day?