

**U.S. HISTORY AND GOVERNMENT  
HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENTS  
DUE FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 12, 2008**

## **I. Geography and Migration**

Before the arrival of the Europeans in 1492, the Americas were home to hundreds of different Native American nations. Each of these groups shaped their lives around the land in unique ways.

### **Native American Origins**

Many anthropologists agree that Native Americans arrived in the New World during the last Ice Age, about 15,000 to 30,000 years ago. During the Ice Age, enormous amounts of water were frozen in glaciers, which caused sea levels to fall by several hundred feet. As water levels fell, a **land bridge** surfaced between Siberia and Alaska where the **Bering Strait** is now located. Anthropologists believe that this land bridge allowed Asian peoples to cross over to North America, where they moved south and eventually populated the continent.

Some Native Americans have challenged this idea. Their tribal **origin myths** and **oral histories** (unwritten information passed down through generations by word of mouth) suggest that their most distant ancestors came from the land itself. These beliefs, however, do not necessarily rule out the possibility of a land bridge crossing.

Some Native Americans argue that migration across the land bridge may have gone in both directions. In addition, there may have been a land bridge between northeastern America and the Scandinavian countries of Europe.

**Quick Review 1:** Most Inuit people (also known as Eskimo) live in Canada and Alaska. About one percent of Inuit live on the Asian coastline of Russia in Siberia. How do you explain this data?

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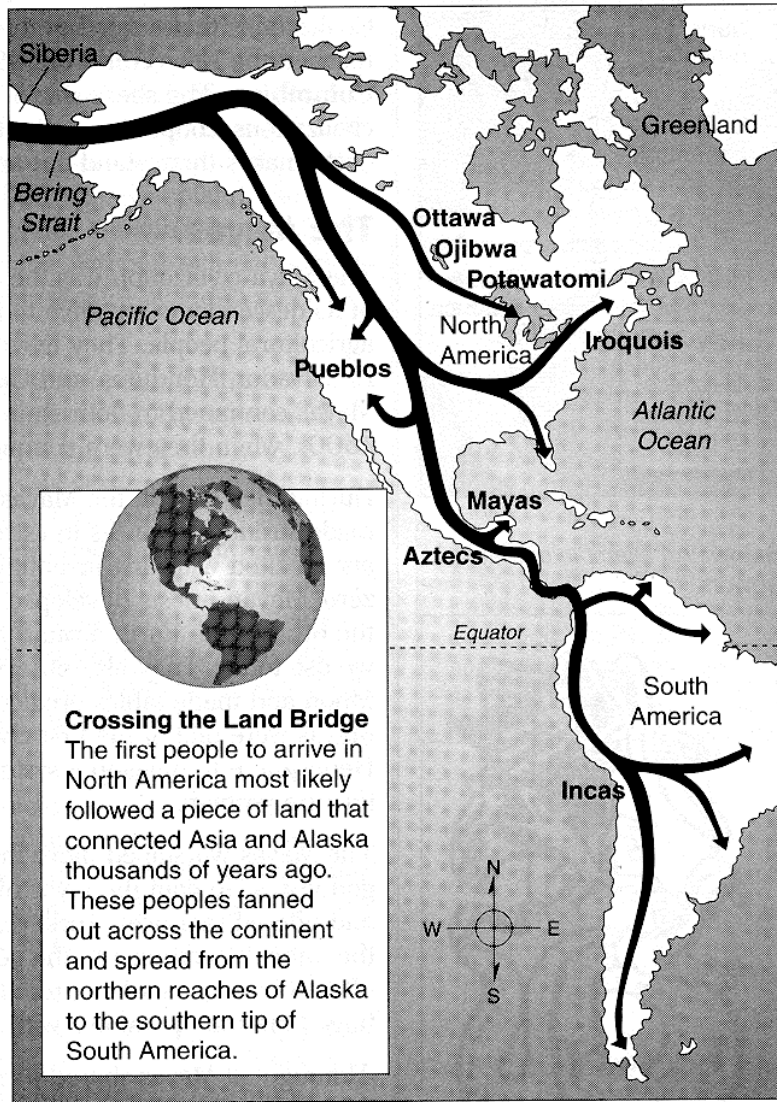
### **Geographic Features and Settlement Patterns**

Some Native Americans were **nomadic** (wandering). Others chose to settle in one place. How and why did these differences develop? Geographical features played an important role in Native American cultures and settlement patterns. For instance, the climate in Mexico was ideal for the wild grass that was later developed into corn, or **maize**. It is not surprising that maize was highly important to the Native Americans who settled in Mexico.

## Early American Migration

Other geographical regions had important **natural resources**. Woodlands were especially rich in wild game. Larger game, especially buffalo, roamed on the Great Plains. Fish were often plentiful where there was water. Other regions were good for farming. **Trade routes** also were a factor in settlement. Many Native Americans settled along the Mississippi River, as river travel was far easier than overland travel.

Without knowing much about the Native Americans who lived in any particular region, knowing about the geography of the region can help you guess what kind of lives they led. What about the Native Americans who lived on the northern shores of the Great Lakes? Surrounded by water, they probably depended on fish and game but were restricted by the climate from growing many crops. It is likely that they used canoes made out of birch bark, which is abundant in that region.



Those nations that depended upon farming and trade generally built permanent dwellings and lived in cities. Those that depended upon hunting tended to lead a nomadic life, moving from place to place to follow the herds.

**Quick Review 2:** Describe some possible characteristics of Native American nations that lived along the Mississippi River. Give reasons for your answers.

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