

# Prehistoric Native Americans

## The Woodland Period

By Jack

During the Woodland Period, the prehistoric natives made slow but definite improvements to their technology, weapons and fashion. There were not any massive, overnight changes, but more lots of little changes that eventually improved the technology of the native Americans.

Several improvements were made to weaponry and tools during this period, such as a refining of bone and stone tools, and a switch from slings and atlatls to bows and arrows at the end of the period. Also, the use of pottery vessels became more widespread, and the decorations on these vessels became more and more complex. A lot of natives ended their nomadic lifestyle and settled down to become farmers.

At the beginning of the woodland period, a lot of pottery was beginning to spring up, as its use became more widespread. There is evidence of several permanent settlements where people were beginning to farm. Elaborate burial practices, where people were buried under burial mounds (which is taken to indicate social change), and a different social organization both marked the beginning of the period. The white-tailed deer was the most common prey of these prehistoric hunters. Shellfish also formed an important part of the diet.

In the middle of the period, trade flourished between the different native American nations, to the point where there was a trade network that covered most of the Eastern United States. Burials of important persons were extremely elaborate in this period. Because of the similarities between different groups, scientists believe that most of the tribes in the area probably had a common religion.

In the late period, the trading network that had flourished in the middle dissolved, and the tribes headed off their separate ways. The bow and arrow became commonly used, and the Three Sisters (maize, beans and squash) began to be grown in villages. It was in this time that the tribes really began to name themselves (Lenape is an example). And so, by the late portion of the period, the prehistoric native American civilization ended, replaced by the different tribes that the settlers encountered.