

Summary: Peoples of the East

The Eastern Woodlands

The Eastern Woodlands stretched from the Atlantic coast to the Mississippi River and from the Gulf of Mexico to the Great Lakes. It had plenty of rain and was rich in natural resources. There were many sources of food. Forests covered the region. Many American Indian nations lived in the mountains, valleys, and plains. They hunted deer, bears, and rabbits. They made syrup from the sap of maple trees.

Near the Great Lakes, American Indians gathered wild rice. Most were also farmers. Their staple crops, called the “three sisters,” were corn, beans, and squash. Woodland Indians made houses appropriate to the climate. In the warm south, houses could have no walls, just roofs for shade and protection from the rain. They wore light clothing woven from grasses. In the cold north, Woodland Indians built longhouses. Many families lived together in a longhouse. They wore warm deerskin clothing.

The Haudenosaunee

Five Haudenosaunee nations stopped warring and formed a confederation between 1100 and 1600. The confederation, known as the Haudenosaunee League, included Mohawks, Oneidas, Onondagas, Cayugas, and Senecas. Later, the Tuscarora joined. The Haudenosaunee, also called the Iroquois, lived in clans. Clan mothers, who were the oldest women in the clan, chose chiefs. The League was governed by chiefs from each nation. To make a decision, all of the chiefs had to agree. They discussed issues until they reached agreement.

The Haudenosaunee traded with other American Indians. They used wampum to symbolize agreements and show important events. When the Europeans came into the region they bartered furs for blankets and knives. More than 50,000 Haudenosaunee live in North America now. Some live in their homelands in Canada and New York State. Some live in cities. Many follow traditional customs and ceremonies. Some Mohawks are steelworkers. They helped build landmarks such as the Empire State Building and the Golden Gate Bridge.



Before You Read

Find and underline each vocabulary word.

longhouse *noun*, a large house made out of wood poles and covered with bark

confederation *noun*, a type of government in which separate groups of people join together, but local leaders still make most decisions for their group

wampum *noun*, pieces of carefully shaped seashell made into strings or belts

barter *verb*, to exchange goods without using money



After You Read

REVIEW What were the **three sisters**? Draw a box around the sentence that tells about the three sisters.

REVIEW Why did the Haudenosaunee use **wampum**? Circle the sentence that tells how the Haudenosaunee used wampum.