

# Summary: Ancient Americans

## People Arrive in the Americas

During the Ice Age much of the world's water was frozen in glaciers. The ocean floor between Alaska and Asia was a grassy land bridge. Many scientists think people followed migrating animal herds across it. Migration stopped about 10,000 years ago when the glaciers melted and the seas rose. People who had crossed from Asia, called Paleo-Indians, spread out over North and South America. They are the ancestors of modern American Indians.

## Civilizations Develop

Early Paleo-Indians hunted big animals. About 11,000 years ago the big animals began to die out. People learned new ways to get food. They hunted smaller animals, fished, and gathered wild plants.

About 9,000 years ago some Paleo-Indians began to use agriculture. Scientists think people in present-day Mexico grew the first crops of corn, beans, and squash. People's lives changed as they stopped migrating to grow crops. More people survived because of the supply of food.

Paleo-Indians farmed and built villages and cities. The Adena, Hopewell, and Mississippians were Mound Builders. They built giant earth mounds and large villages in North America. Their civilization lasted for about 2,500 years.

The Aztec civilization controlled Central Mexico around 1300 and was strong for 200 years. The Aztec city of Tenochtitlán had hundreds of buildings and roads. At one time the population was 250,000.

American Indian groups developed civilizations in almost every region of North America. The Inuit settled near the Arctic, in Alaska, Canada, and Greenland. They adapted to the cold climate by hunting seal, whale, and caribou. These and other animals were their source of food, clothing, shelter, and crafts.



### Before You Read

Find and underline each vocabulary word.

**glacier** *noun*, a huge, thick sheet of slowly moving ice

**migration** *noun*, movement from one region to another

**agriculture** *noun*, farming, or growing plants

**civilization** *noun*, a group of people living together with organized systems of government, religion, and culture



### After You Read

**REVIEW** According to many scientists, how did people first come to North America? Circle the sentences that tell how scientists think people came to North America.

**REVIEW** Where did the mound building civilizations live? Underline the sentence that tells you the answer.

**REVIEW** What was Tenochtitlán? Highlight the sentences that describe it.