

Summary: Peoples of the Northwest

The Northwest

The Northwest stretches from Alaska to Northern California. The Pacific Northwest lies along the coast with mountains to the east. American Indians who lived in the area around 1500 got what they needed from the land and water. One key resource was salmon. They caught so much salmon that surplus was dried to eat during the year. The forests were another important resource. People used cedar logs to make totem poles. Canoes were carved from cedar and used to carry goods. On important occasions, people held potlatches.

People of the Plateau region lived on the Columbia Plateau between the cascades and the Rockies. The Nez Perce (NEZ PURS) were one of the largest nations of the Plateau region. They traveled through different parts of the region for resources they could use in certain seasons. In spring, the Nez Perce caught salmon in the river valleys. In summer and fall, they gathered berries in places where they grew. They hunted animals and stored food for winter. In winter, they stayed in villages.

The Kwakiutl

The Kwakiutl (kwah kee OOT l) were a large American Indian group in the Pacific Northwest. They lived near the coast or on rivers. Fish and other animals that lived near the ocean were their source of food. They shredded bark to make clothes.

In Kwakiutl villages, people were part of clans. A clan is a group of related families. Several families from the same clan lived together in big houses. In spring, summer, and fall, the Kwakiutl left their villages. They fished and gathered roots and berries. They kept food to store for the winter. During the winter, people returned to their villages. Then they had time to weave, carve, and hold celebrations such as potlatches.

Today most Kwakiutl live along the west coast of Canada. They earn their living by fishing and logging. They keep their cultural traditions through dances, stories, and works of art.



Before You Read

Find and underline each vocabulary word.

surplus *adjective*, extra

potlatch *noun*, large feast that lasts for days

clan *noun*, group of related families



After You Read

REVIEW What two important resources helped the Northwest Indians live?

Underline the words that tell where the Nez Perce got the things they needed. Highlight two important resources.

REVIEW How were clans important to the Kwakiutl?

Draw a box around the words that say what a clan is. Underline the sentence that tells how clans influenced how people lived.