The Plateau People

The Plateau Peoples lived in the region found in the interior of British Columbia that lies between the Rocky Mountains on the east and the Coast Mountains on the west. They decorated their tools and carved sculptures from antler and soapstone. They also painted human animals and supernatural figures (pictographs) on the rock walls of the river canyons. They spoke three distinct languages: Athapaskan, Salishan and Kutenai.

The Kootenay lived in hide-covered tipis, like the Plains People.

They made their clothing from tanned animal skins. The women stretched the hides, shaped them and sewed them with sinew thread. Men wore breechcloths, shirts and leggings. Women wore long dresses. Both wore deerskin moccasins. In winter, they wrapped themselves in fur robes and blankets made from goat hair. The clothing was often decorated with shells, porcupine quills, and ochre designs. Some people pierced their ears and noses, painted their faces or tattooed their bodies.

Salmon was the most abundant food for most plateau groups. The men spent much of the late summer and fall catching salmon. The women cut the fish into fillets and hung them on racks to dry. The women also gathered plant foods such as roots, bulbs and berries. The men hunted deer, elk, bear, goat and bighorn sheep.

In the winter, the Plateau People lived in pit houses dug into the ground—often into the bank of a creek. The walls were built of logs and sealed with earth and bark. The domed roof was made of branches and poles and insulated with earth and grass. Each pit house sheltered several families. Sometimes the houses were connected by tunnels. A simple opening at the top served as the smoke hole and entrance, which was reached by a ladder. In spring, they lived in camps near the hunting grounds or berry patches. In warmer months, most people lived in oblong lodges, covered with bark or mats.

Each village was independent. Each one had several chiefs who were respected for their wealth or abilities in making speeches, hunting or making war. Every adult male had a say in group decisions.

These people believed that the world was inhabited by numerous supernatural beings—some with good powers, while others were dangerous. Shamans were also an important part of the religious festivities. Like the Northwest Coast People, a shaman could be a man or a woman.
Lesson Four: The Plateau People

Name: ___________________________ Date: ___________________________

Write a short explanation for each of the following terms.

1. Pictograph ______________________________
   ______________________________
   ______________________________
   ______________________________

2. Pit house ______________________________
   ______________________________
   ______________________________
   ______________________________

3. Shaman ______________________________
   ______________________________
   ______________________________
   ______________________________

4. Languages of the Plateau People __________
   ______________________________
   ______________________________
   ______________________________

5. Decoration of clothing __________________
   ______________________________
   ______________________________
   ______________________________
The Algonkian People

The Algonkian Peoples lived in areas that were heavily forested, particularly forests containing birch trees. Birch bark was superior to all other wood for the making of canoes. It was also used for making containers and covering wigwams.

Many of the Algonkian tribes practised simple farming. They cleared small pieces of land and grew corn, beans and squash. The women gathered wild food such as plants, wild berries, and wild rice. Fishing was of great importance. They hunted deer and moose.

Some of the Algonkians lived in longhouses for part of the year. On hunting and fishing trips, they lived in conical wigwams. Each wigwam housed a single family, although some groups lived in larger dwellings. In the centre was a fireplace and above it a hole to allow the smoke to escape. The floor was covered in boughs and furs were placed on them for sleeping. Whenever the family moved, they left the poles behind, as they could get more wherever they moved.

Most of the women wore long tunics over leggings and the men wore short tunics over breechcloths and leggings. All wore moccasins and fur robes in winter. All these clothes were made from animal skins. Some were decorated with dyed porcupine quills and moose hair, shells, feathers and clams.

The Algonkians lived in villages for most of the year. Each village elected a chief, but most decisions were made by a council of adult males. Most groups elected a war chief to lead them into battle.

Men and women had different responsibilities. Men hunted, fished, skinned game, and made canoes, tools and frames for the wigwams. Women planted and tended the crops, cared for the children, made clothes, baskets and wigwam covers, prepared skins and gathered wild plants.

These people believed in supernatural powers and beings. Since all animals had spirits, they had to be treated with respect. If they were offended, they would not allow themselves to be caught. The northern groups of the Algonkian People placed great emphasis on a vision quest.
Lesson Five: The Algonkian People

Name: ___________________________ Date: ___________________________

Answer the following questions about the Algonkian People.

1) Why did the Algonkian people prefer birch bark?

____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________

2) Describe a typical wigwam.

____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________

3) Why didn’t they take the poles for the wigwam with them when they moved?

____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________

4) Describe the clothing worn by Algonkian women and men.

____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________

5) How did the responsibilities of the men differ from those of the women?

____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________

6) What was the basis of their religion?

____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
Northern Hunters

The Native tribes that made up the cultural group called Northern Hunters occupied most of northern Alberta and the Mackenzie River region, the Cordillera (from the Rocky Mountains to the Coast Ranges), the Alaskan Plateau and Alaska. The winters in this region were long and harsh, while the summers were short and hot with long days. The Native Peoples of this Subarctic Region spoke either Algonkian or Athapaskan.

Most clothing was made from animal skins which were tanned and made into coats, shirts, leggings, trousers, moccasins, mitts and hats. They were often skillfully decorated with dyed moosehair and porcupine quills, shells, seeds, ochre and animal skin fringes. Warm robes were made of rabbit fur cut into strips and woven together.

The most common shelter was a cone-shaped dwelling made of a pole frame and covered with hides or slabs of bark. Each house had a fireplace and was occupied by a social group, usually an extended family.

These northern hunters were organized into small groups of about twenty to fifty people related by blood or marriage. There were no formal chiefs. The people largely made their own decisions and leaders were usually the most skilled hunters. Family was traced through both parents.

Men and women were responsible for their own activities. Men hunted large game, but both men and women hunted small game and fished. Men made the weapons and processed the skins and food. Both men and women looked after the children.

They believed that there were supernatural powers that deeply influenced their lives. Animals were respected in order to be allowed to be killed for their food. Boys sought visions when they reached puberty. Shamans were also an important part of the Native religion. They could contact the spirit helpers, use their powers to hurt people and make medicines from plants to cure the sick.
Lesson Six: Northern Hunters

Name: ___________________________ Date: _________________________

Fill in the correct word to complete each sentence.

1. The Northern hunters lived in what is now northern ______________________ and spoke either ______________________ or ______________________.

2. They cooked their food by boiling it in a container made from ______________________.

3. They wore warm robes made from ______________________ skin.

4. Their houses were shaped like a ______________________ and were covered with ______________________ or ______________________.

5. The groups consisted of about ______________________ to ______________________ people who were all related by ______________________ or marriage.

6. The ______________________ hunted the large game and made the ______________________.

7. Boys sought ______________________ when they reached puberty.

8. ______________________ could contact the spirit helpers or cure the sick.

9. These people thanked the ______________________ because they respected nature.

10. They believed that ______________________ influenced their daily lives.