

**THE NATIVE RACES  
OF  
BRITISH NORTH  
AMERICA**

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**NORTH AMERICAN INDIAN CHIEF.**

# PREFACE

During recent years there has been a very happy tendency to change the nature of geographical teaching from a monotonous memorising of the names of natural features to a subject of living interest.

In the endeavour to effect this change there has been a serious omission in our failure to appeal to natural interests of children by making the human element a central feature of geographical work.

A study of the picturesque lives of native races of the British Empire is an absolute essential if the teacher wishes to impart the appropriate colour and setting to a subsequent course of economic, regional, and political geography.

The sharp contrast between European beliefs and customs and those of primitive people is in itself an incentive to study and interest. In addition to this, a sympathetic understanding of the many native races who are controlled by English statesmanship is necessary for the material and moral progress of dominions in the British Empire.

W. D. HAMBLBY.



**NATIVE TRIBES OF BRITISH  
NORTH AMERICA**

# CHAPTER I

## THE COUNTRY AND ITS PEOPLE

The "Old World" was startled in 1493 by the great navigator Columbus, who returned with wonderful narratives concerning the "New World" of North America, whose native population he called "Indians" because, strange as it may seem to us, he thought that by sailing west he must come to the land of India. At the present day scientists are at a loss to account for the origin of Eskimo and North American Indian tribes; sometimes the former are connected with the European cave dwellers, who did such beautiful work in bone and ivory toward the end of the old Stone Age. Whatever may have been the origin of countless numbers of Indians, comprising hundreds of tribes, we may be certain that they had inhabited the continent from a very remote period, for in very deep old layers of soil one may find stone axes and arrowheads, which are side by side with human remains and the bones of extinct species of the horse.

Not one little book, but many large ones, would be required in order to give an account of all the Eskimo and Indian tribes of British North America, to say nothing of the vast numbers of tribes watched over by the United States. So we shall have to content ourselves with a glimpse at the lives of a few tribes inhabiting country which lies between the extreme north of North America and a boundary line passing from the south of

Vancouver Island through the Great Lakes, to the south of the St. Lawrence estuary.

Eskimo tribes on the west coast of Greenland are under Danish rule, while Eskimo and Indian people of Alaska are subject to control by the U.S.A. Hence we shall concern ourselves chiefly with the "Central" Eskimo of Hudson Bay, Baffin Land, Davis Strait, and Labrador; while with regard to Indian tribes we may select just a few of those which lie wholly, or to some great extent, within British territory.



### **A NORTH AMERICAN INDIAN.**

Although Eskimo tribes are to be found from Behring Strait to Greenland, and Indians anywhere between Vancouver Island and Newfoundland, the appearance of peoples in widely separated tribes is very much the same. All the Eskimo are

short of stature (average height 5 ft. 2 in.), well built and sturdy, while the skin colour is a dark yellowish brown, not unlike the shade that characterises the Southern European. In some respects the Eskimo is not unlike an inhabitant of Mongolia, for at once a traveller would notice the broad face, high cheek bones, straight black hair, and oblique eyes. The head of an Eskimo is long in proportion to the breadth, and the very high vault enables a student to pick out an Eskimo skull from a great number of those belonging to other races. The North American Indians, too, are very uniform in appearance, and a native taken from one place could easily be mistaken for an inhabitant of some region far away; for in almost all cases there is the broad face, long well-shaped nose, and pointed chin. To speak of a "Red" Indian gives quite a wrong impression, for the skin is of a coppery brown, with a kind of underlying red tinge. The hair is usually long, straight, and black, but in British Columbia, and amongst the Déné, a reddish shade of hair is not uncommon, while among Salish tribes of the Pacific Coast the hair may be wavy or slightly curled.

Of all the native tribes of British North America the Eskimo have by far the hardest and most unpleasant life, because they have no vegetable foods, cannot practise agriculture, and are entirely dependent on the products of hunting expeditions, which for nine months out of twelve are undertaken in bitterly cold weather, and among dreary wastes of snow. Indians such as the "Haida" of Queen Charlotte Islands, the "Kwakiutl" of Vancouver, and some of the "Salish" and "Déné" tribes of British Columbia, are most fortunate on account of a warm temperate climate and an abundant supply of various animal and vegetable foods.

To the west of the Rocky Mountains lies a hilly, well-wooded country, abounding with game such as deer, foxes, bears, hares, beavers, squirrels, while birds are plentiful, and delicious salmon may be obtained from the Fraser River and its tributaries. Of all trees the cedar has been most useful to the coastal tribes, for it is to them what the cocoa-nut palm is to the people inhabiting the South Sea Islands. From the wood of cedar trees, houses and canoes are made, while clothing may be manufactured from the inner bark; and there is no part of this useful tree which is not put to some good purpose. Basket work is very cleverly woven with strands of different colours representing geometrical patterns, people, and objects. It may be thought that the outlines of human and animal figures are too stiff, but one must remember that the rigid nature of the basket work compels the worker to make straight lines.



**BASKET-WORK HAT: WHALING SCENE INWOVEN. WOOTKA SOUND, N. W. AMERICA.**

Some drawings of animals are provided with human, or almost human faces. This is done, not because the worker is unskilful, but because he believes that spirits of his ancestors may dwell in animals. Therefore the human and animal features are combined in sketches, tattooing, and masks.

Very different from British Columbia is a vast stretch of country from the eastern slopes of the Rocky Mountains to the shores of Hudson Bay. Here are to be found many branches of the Déné Indians under the names of "Beavers," "Dog Ribs," and "Yellow Knives," who have figured in many a story of breathless adventure; and it is with this snow-clad trappers'

country that Jack London has dealt in several of his novels. On the southern shore of Hudson Bay the Algonkin Indians have come into contact with Eskimo peoples, but nowhere are the two very friendly. To the south of the Algonkins are the Lakes Superior, Erie, and Ontario, in which region live the remnants of such important tribes as the Huron, Iroquois, and Mohawks; the last named have been the heroes of many a story book. In the year 1858 all Indian tribes came under the charge of a special department of the Dominion Government, which set aside certain localities for their use. Naturally the natives changed very rapidly when in contact with Europeans, so that to-day they are not the wild people described by such travellers as Fraser, Vancouver, and Mackenzie, who explored the North-West Territories between the years 1793 and 1808. Indian dress, weapons, canoes, carving, religious songs, and dances are still extremely common, and in the United States there is a special department of the Government concerned with the publication of books describing the lives of Indian tribes.

Mr. C. Hill-Tout, who has spent much time in observing the Indian tribes of the Pacific Coast of British North America, says: "There is no doubt in my mind that the present Salish population of about 12,000 does not represent nearly a fifth of the population of this stock at the time of Simon Fraser's visit to them. One tribe alone, the 'Lukungen,' whose settlements are at the south-eastern end of Vancouver's Island, was estimated in 1859 to number 8500. To-day they could not muster 200, or less than one-fortieth of their former numbers."... "That dying race the Haida of Queen Charlotte's Islands numbered, in 1840, 8328. Twenty years ago that

number had dwindled to 2000, and to-day the native population of these small islands is about 700." Perhaps it is safe to say that the total native population of British North America is only one-tenth part of what it was a hundred years ago. Alcohol, small-pox, and pneumonia have caused a heavy death rate, in addition to which the easier lives, and the adoption of a good deal of European clothing, have made the natives less robust, and therefore an easy prey to all forms of sickness.

## **CHAPTER II**

### **SOME OCCUPATIONS OF INDIAN TRIBES**

At many points along the shores of British Columbia the traveller may notice the large strongly-built dwellings of the coast Salish, who are experts in splitting stout logs from the cedar tree by means of implements made from the horns of the elk and wood of maple trees. Such large dwellings, some of which had a length of over 200 feet, were, of course, occupied by more than one family, and as a rule there were at least half a dozen hearths, each belonging to one of several closely related families who occupied the same large dwelling. The interior of the building was divided into rooms by curtains manufactured from reeds or grasses; temporary screens of this kind were easily removed when the whole room was required for winter dancing festivities, which were generally connected with religious beliefs. Extending all round the walls of the hut was a low platform, which, covered with skins and blankets made from hair of dogs and mountain goats, served as a most comfortable bed, while on its under side could be stored dried fish, roots and berries collected during summer, and vast quantities of fir cones and firewood. Such stores were frequently hidden in the forest, for years ago, before the Canadian police were known, large bands of fierce Indians, named "Kwakiutl," from Vancouver Island preyed upon the quieter coast Salish, carrying off their women, children, and stores. Even now, says a missionary named Father Morice, the

Déné are afraid of the fierce, warlike tribes who paddled their long canoes for many miles up the Fraser River.

The only pieces of furniture worth mentioning are large treasure chests constructed from planks of cedar firmly held by wooden rivets, so that the joints are quite watertight. Such boxes held blankets, costumes worn at dances, and other treasures, of which a chief owned a vast supply.

Salish tribes of the interior had two sets of dwellings, a heavy timber one for winter use, and for summer a light cool structure made by stretching mats over a wooden framework. A similar summer habitation is made by the northern Déné tribes, whose pointed tent has the appearance of a true Indian "wigwam," and at the present time an encampment of these tribes has the same appearance as it had a century ago, when visited by the great explorer Sir Alexander Mackenzie.

Of equal importance with the building of houses is the manufacture of clothing, for which all Indian tribes have an abundance of raw material obtained during hunting excursions. The moose—which by the way is a domestic animal and beast of burden among the northern Déné—furnishes a good hide, which along with deerskin can be made into strong trousers and leggings, or into shoes named "moccasins." Blankets, forming a covering for the shoulders and body, are made from wool of the mountain goat, and in some cases, down from ducks is interwoven with the fabric, which is made by use of the old-fashioned spindle. Among the interior Salish a man usually possesses a shirt, trousers, leggings, moccasins, and cap. The shirt and trousers are generally made ornamental by fringes of deerskin, while to the moccasins are added dyed

porcupine quills, goose feathers, or horse hair. Winter socks are made from skins of the bear, buffalo, or deer, but in summer these are replaced by lighter socks, manufactured from grass and cedar bark. Small animals, such as the fox, lynx, hawk, and beaver, furnish material suitable for caps, and among the "Thompson" Indians a man always made a cap from the covering of what an Indian calls his "totem," that is, an animal which he believes to be his own special friend and helper.

The summer dress<sup>u</sup> worn by women did not differ much from that of the men, save that it was longer, and usually ornamented with claws and teeth of the beaver. A chief's dress was very elaborate, and the most interesting part of his costume consisted of a cap made from the hair of women from noble families. Most boys are acquainted with tattooing, which is very common amongst soldiers and sailors nowadays. A favourite Indian pastime was the tattooing of figures representing animals; and sometimes the chin, forehead, or cheeks would be ornamented with tattooed designs of some animal, usually the "manitou," or creature which a boy selected for his companion and guardian through life.

A good many occupations are connected with the food supply, and everywhere near the coast or the banks of Fraser River there are Indians busy catching, cleaning, drying, and extracting oil from fish, among which the salmon is most prized. Gathering quantities of roots, berries, and nuts is a favourite occupation with women and children, who are made responsible for laying in large quantities of vegetable food for winter. While men are occupied with hunting and fishing,

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