

CHAPTER ONE

ONE WORLD, TWO WORLDS

The story of the United States begins long before the arrival of European explorers who “discovered” America. There were people here before the Europeans came. We refer to them as Native Americans, or American Indians.

When the Europeans arrived, there were hundreds of different Native American **tribes** living in what we now know as the United States. These Native Americans dressed, acted, and spoke differently than anyone Europeans had ever known.

Here are some things that were common to almost all Native American **cultures**:

- Native American tools were made of stone. European tools were made of metal.
- American Indians generally didn't believe that individual people could own land. However, they did believe that tribes could (sort of) own land. Tribes would often fight each other over the right to live on and hunt land.
- Native Americans didn't keep animals in pens or tied up for food. When they needed food, they went hunting, and they usually didn't kill more animals than necessary.
- American Indians wore clothing made of animal skin. They generally didn't grow cotton, for instance.

- Native Americans had different **religions** than the Christian religion brought across the ocean by the Europeans.
- Prior to the arrival of white settlers, the Native Americans' main weapons were the bow and arrow, war club, **blowgun** and **tomahawk**. Europeans, on the other hand, had guns.

Perhaps the biggest difference between Native American culture and white culture is that most American Indian tribes didn't have a written language. Each tribe had a spoken language, but not a written one.

It would be wrong to say that Native American cultures were all alike. The hundreds of tribes living in the **present-day** United States were all different from each other.

The first tribes that encountered white explorers and settlers were the ones that lived on and near the Atlantic coast. These included the Pequot, Iroquois, Powhatan and Cherokee tribes, among many others. Each of these tribes had its own culture and traditions. ❀