

CHAPTER THREE

BREECHCLOTHS AND ANIMAL HIDES

Native Americans not only differed in the shelters that they used, but also in the clothing they wore. The two biggest factors that determined what Native Americans wore were the **climate** and resources available to them.

Have you ever seen a **leather** jacket? Leather is animal **hide** which has been turned into clothing through a process called **tanning**. Tanning turns the animal skin into leather, which lasts a long time. If you have a leather jacket, it was probably made with the skin of a cow.

Native Americans wore a lot of leather clothes. In the northeast and southeast, leather was usually made from bear or deer skin. In the Plains region, it was usually made of buffalo.

And what types of clothing did they wear? Men often wore **breechcloths**. A breechcloth is a long piece of tanned animal hide tucked into a belt. The hide winds over the belt, under it, and over it again—sort of like underwear. Men also sometimes wore leggings, which are pant legs tied onto the same belt that held the breechcloth.

Men and boys would often go shirtless in the warm months, but in the winter wear a cloak made from animal hide.

Women and girls wore skirts made from tanned animal hide. They also might wear long dresses made of deerskin.

Most Native Americans wore shoes on their feet that were made of leather. Every tribe had a name for shoes. Today Native American shoes are generally referred to as **moccasins**.

To decorate their clothes, Native Americans might use feathers or shells. These shells might have come from a riverbed or the ocean. Native Americans would also color their clothes by dyeing them using berries, walnut hulls or other things found in nature.

By the way, if you want to see what some of these clothes look like, see if you can get someone to take you to a Native American re-enactment. You might also like visiting the Sequoyah Birthplace Museum in Monroe County and Oconaluftee, the living history museum in Cherokee, North Carolina. 🌟