



# MODULE 1: PRE-COLUMBIAN WORLD

PRE 1492

# Before we start:

- \* Questions to think about in this Module:
  - \* Where did the Aboriginals come from?
  - \* Where did they settle and why? (Population and Settlement)
  - \* What did the Aboriginals do to fulfill their basic needs?  
Why?
  - \* Who makes the decisions in their societies? (Powers)
  - \* What were the things that made these societies unique?
  - \* What ideas motivated these societies? (Culture and thought)

# Geography

- \* Geography and climate often determine where people settle and what they do there.
- \* North America has 4 “gateways” that were used to access the continent :
  - \* Hudson’s Bay (closer to Europe, deep into continent BUT freezes quickly and for most of the year)
  - \* St. Lawrence (access to many continents BUT freezes in the winter)
  - \* Hudson -Mohawk (river valley’s - allows access to Great Lakes (does not freeze))
  - \* Mississippi (Gulf of Mexico - NEVER Freezes!)

# Physiographical Regions:

- \* NOT MANMADE
- \* The main natural regions of North America are:
  - \* Cordillera (mountains and plateaus)
  - \* The Canadian Shield (rocks, trees, lakes (1/3 of Canada))
  - \* The Appalachians (line of settlements between colonies)
  - \* Western Cordillera (Rocky Mountains)
  - \* Innutians
- \* Lowlands:
  - \* Great Lakes - St. Lawrence Lowlands
  - \* Atlantic Coastal Plains (On the Atlantic (Ex. Florida))
  - \* Interior Plains (Gulf of Mexico)
  - \* Hudson Bay Lowlands (along Hudson's Bay)

# Climate:

- \* Canada has many climate zones
- \* We live in the Humid Continental Zone
  - \* Short, hot, wet summers with cold, wet winters
- \* Generally, as you move north, the climate grows colder and the growing season become shorter
- \* Precipitation tends to decrease as you move further from major bodies of water (and as you move into colder climates)

# The First Occupants: Aboriginals

- \* Population and Settlement
- \* Subtopics:
  - \* How did the Aboriginals get here?
  - \* MILLS and PAWNS: population disturbance and growth
  - \* ISSUE: Hard ownership, hard claims (Who really owns Canada?)
- \* The Original Occupants
  - \* About 14,000 years ago nomadic hunters from Asia began arriving in North America. Do you think they realize they had discovered a new continent?
  - \* Archeologists are not certain how exactly people got here. BUT! there are TWO good possibilities!
    - \* The Land Bridge Hypothesis (Bering Strait)
    - \* Watercraft Hypothesis

# North American: Pre-Columbian

- \* To understand Aboriginal settlement we first need to distinguish between the different linguistic (language) groups.
- \* These groups share common cultural and economics (ways of life).
  - \* What is the link between ways of life and population?
  - \* Why are some places more heavily populated than others?
  - \* Why do some populations grow more rapidly than others?
  - \* Iroquois lived in the fertile Great Lakes - St. Lawrence Lowlands. WHY? How was this different to the Algonquians?

# Economics

- \* Economics: how people fulfill the basic necessities of life
- \* Sedentary societies grow larger than nomadic ones
  - \* The land can only support so many people
  - \* Farming, Hunting, and Gathering
- \* It seems common sense: once farming is discovered, people adopted it because it was a more desirable lifestyle
- \* However, evidence suggests that when game was plentiful, people seemed to have preferred the nomadic lifestyle

# Birthrate

- \* Nomadic women had fewer babies
- \* If every nomadic woman has on average fewer children than sedentary women, what does that mean for demographics in the long run?
- \* Land Claims
- \* Who owns Canada? Do Canadians today simply own it?
- \* Pre-Columbian Economy
  - \* In North Eastern North America, the economy was close to the subsistence level (east filled the basic needs)
  - \* There was little surplus

# Iroquoians

- \* Sedentary - practiced agriculture
- \* Grew corn (maize), beans, squash, and tobacco in the Lowlands
- \* When soil became infertile over a period of years, they moved the village
- \* Supported with hunting and gathering
- \* Women were the farmers
- \* **MILLS**

# Algonquians

- \* Nomadic Hunters
- \* Fulfilled basic needs through the wildlife that could be shot or trapped as well as the berries, nuts, and roots that could be gathered
- \* The Canadian Shield could support a much smaller population
- \* **PAWNS**

# Trade

- \* Power - the ability to make things happen!
- \* Pre Columbian power
- \* Who had the power in Aboriginal societies?
- \* Chiefs could be the leaders of whole tribes or family based bands
- \* Chiefs had to be good speakers and used the power of persuasion rather than force (in most cases).

# Iroquoian Societies

- \* Since the Iroquoian societies lived more settled and structured lives than their Algonquian counterparts, they developed a complex cultural pattern
- \* Women have substantial political power (except when it came to warfare and hunting)
- \* This was due to the fact that women provided the food in their society (they were the farmers) and traced their family lines through the women
- \* They had the most important economic role

# Iroquoian Societies

- \* Older women held the power in the villages as they elected the male leaders
- \* They also had the power to remove these leaders from power!

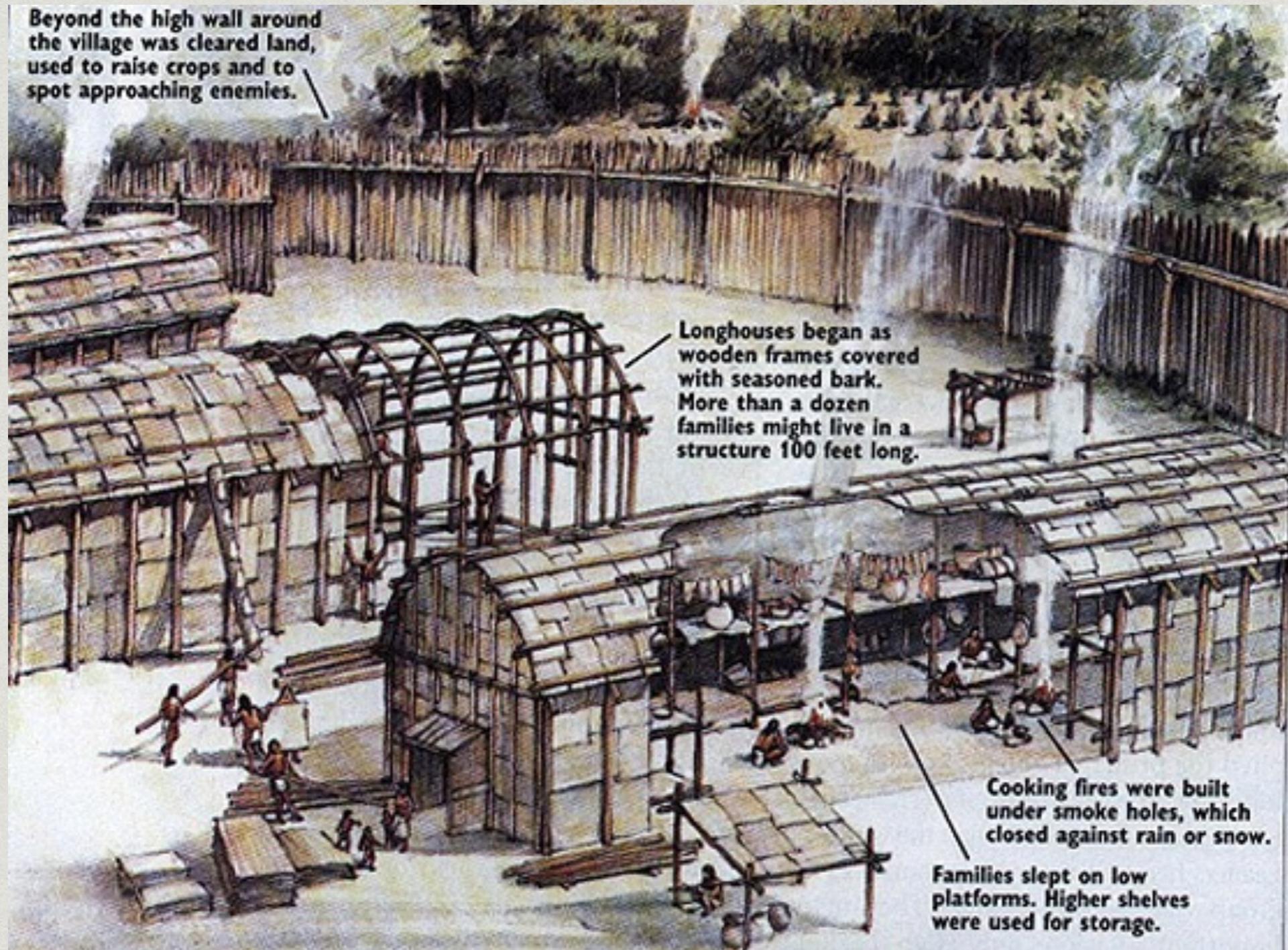
# Iroquoian Societies

- \* The largest group of Iroquoian aboriginals were the Wendat (more commonly know as the Huron)
- \* The name Huron was given to them by the Europeans and was often seen as derogatory
- \* Although their language is similar, the Iroquoian fought numerous wars against the Southern Five Nations Confederacy

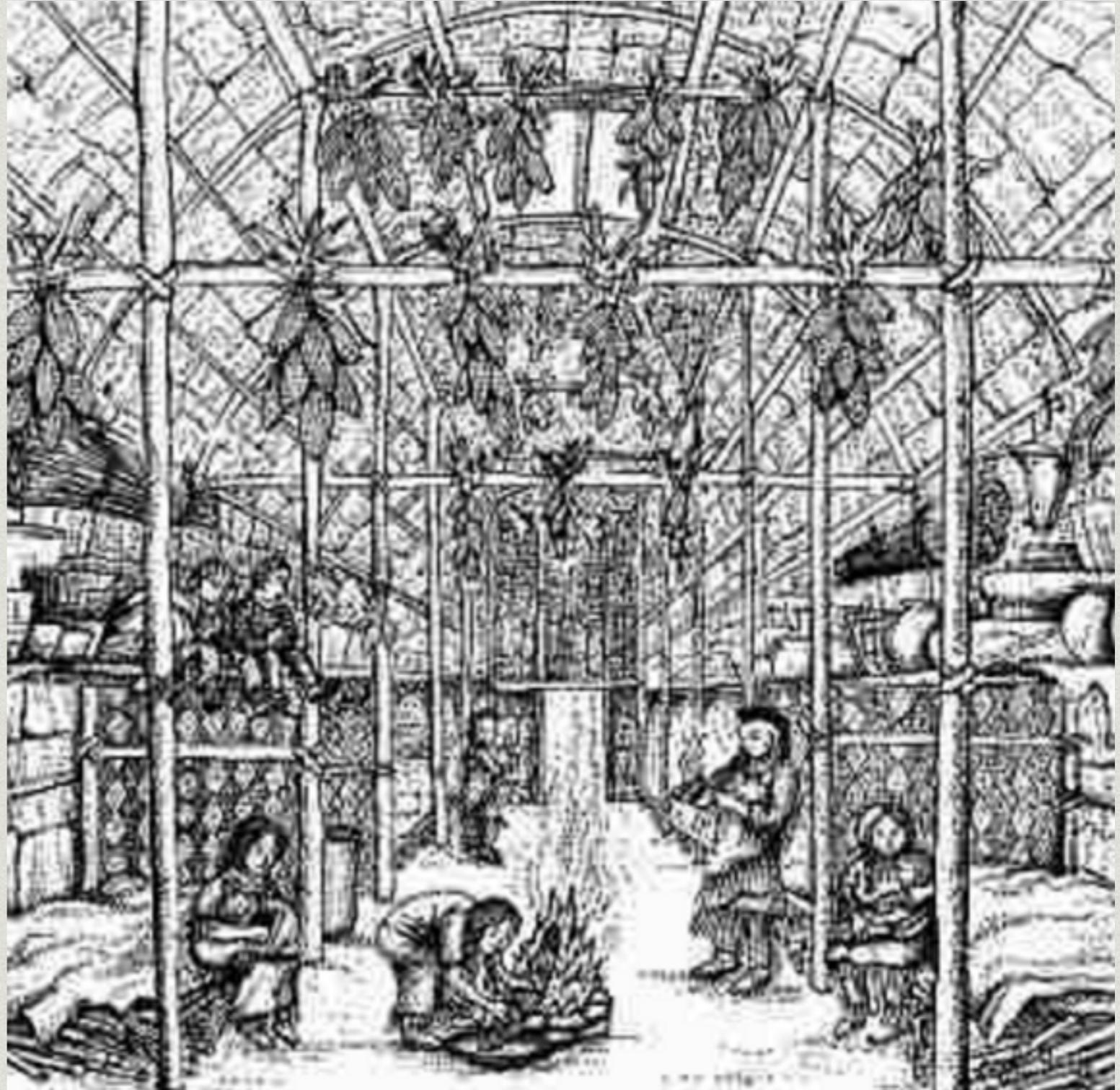
# Iroquoian Societies

- \* They lived in a very small area of land compared to the large regions of the Algonquians
- \* Their way of life (sedentary) allowed for denser populations and settlement (allowing for farming and agriculture)
- \* Families lived in longhouses

# Longhouses



# Longhouses



# Longhouses

- \* As many as fifty people lived in each longhouse
- \* Long and narrow
- \* Built up to 200 feet long, 20 feet wide and 20 feet high
- \* The frames were made with poles that were covered with bark that was cut into rectangular slabs
- \* A variety of different trees were used to build a longhouse, depending on the tree's strength, flexibility and resistance to decay

# Longhouses

- \* Separate rooms were created in longhouses by using screens and mats
- \* The space on either side of this was divided by partitions of skins into a series of stalls (each family occupying a stall)
- \* Some longhouses even had 2 stories
- \* Interior was dark and smokey as there were no windows.

# Longhouses

- \* Dried food was hung from the rafters
- \* Sources of light were the small holes in the roof
- \* During the winter the doors were covered with animal hides to keep the cold and animals out.
- \* Contained little or no furniture
- \* Some blankets or skins served as a bed and there were no tables or chairs

# What did the Villages look like?

- \* High wooden palisades surrounded Iroquoian villages
- \* To protect them from attacks by other tribes, attacks by animals, and to create a windbreak in the winter
- \* Fields of corn (maize), beans and squash surrounded the outside of the villages

# What did the Villages look like?



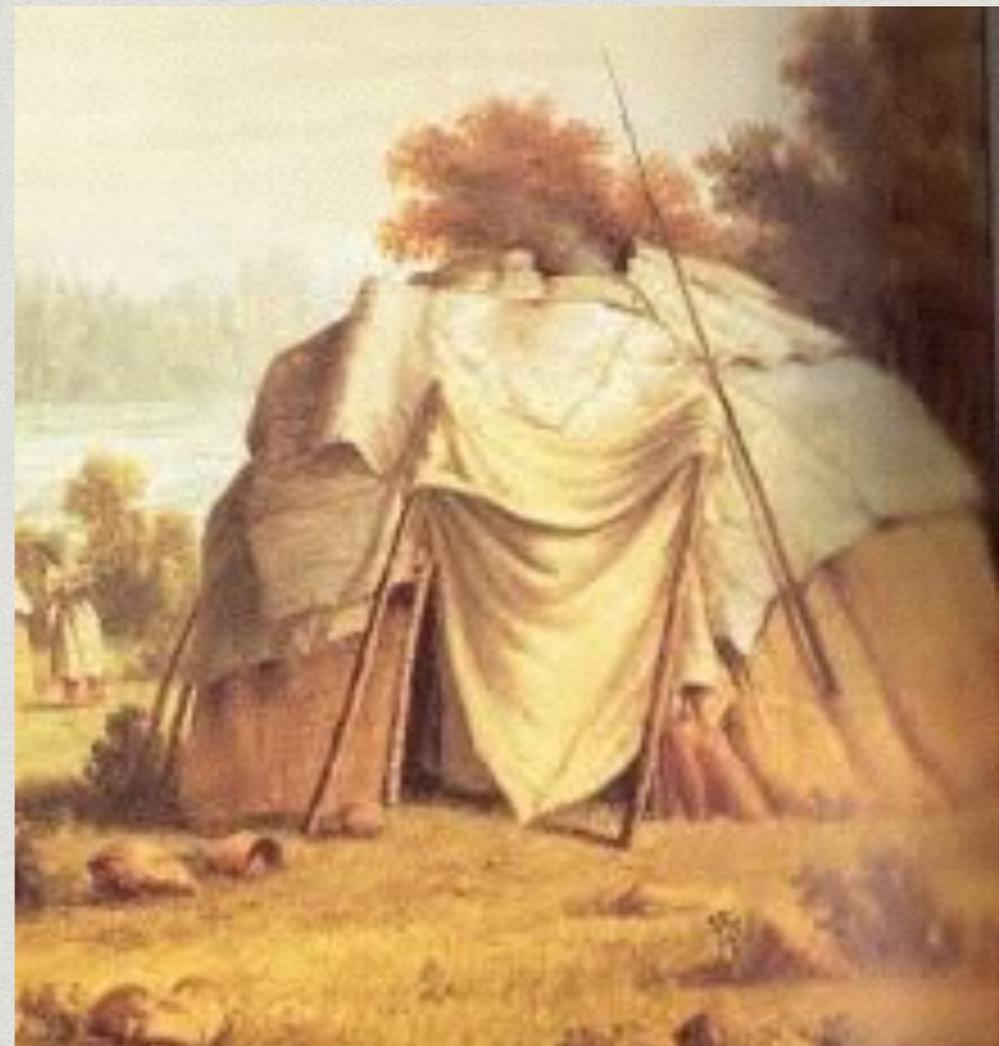
# Algonquian Societies

- \* Refers to a large number of First Nations groups of the Northern Ontario, Quebec and Atlantic Canada
- \* They roamed Canada's northern forests and the eastern seacoast
- \* Men held the political power
- \* They provided the food, as they hunted for game

# Algonquin Societies

- \* They travelled along waterways in birch bark canoes, which were lightweight and easy to build and also easy to carry when the people needed to portage around waterfalls or rapids
- \* During the summer, they usually stayed together at fishing camps in wigwams
- \* These bark covered buildings were round and dome shaped.
- \* Usually only two families stayed in these wigwams as they were not permanent.
- \* In the winter they would split up into small family units
  - \* Each would follow herd of deer or moose, hunting for survive during the long snowy months

# Wigwams



# Inuit

- \* Also known as Eskimos (this is seen as a negative term)
- \* They lived across the North American Arctic, north of the tree line
- \* They needed to be very creative to survive as the climate was very harsh
- \* They hunted caribou and seals, walruses, sea lions and whales and they used almost all parts to the animal to survive.
- \* These items included waterproof boots from sealskin, warm winter parkas from caribou skin, and seal oil could be burned in lamps for light

# Inuit

- \* Just like other Aboriginal tribes the Inuit were very spiritual
- \* They believed in the Earth, it's natural shape, and that it gave to the concept of life overall
- \* After the Europeans arrive this way of life and spirituality would change drastically.

# Democracy

- \* DEMO = people/ KRATIA = power
- \* Aboriginal societies were NOT democratic in our sense of the word. There was no voting on issues.
- \* HOWEVER Chiefs depended on a consensus and the assent of his people
- \* Bad decision = loss of power (quickly)
- \* Aboriginal people had considerable freedom in many ways but were always constrained by tradition and strict social customs

# What is Culture?

- \* Religious belief
- \* Art
- \* Drama
- \* Literature
- \* Sport
- \* All of these make up a group's culture

# Aboriginal Culture

- \* Religion answers and explains big questions:
  - \* How do we live while we are here?
  - \* Where do we go when we die?
- \* The most important cultural aspect of Aboriginal life was their spirituality.
  - \* It was called Animism (or Shamanism)
  - \* They believed that everything had a spirit or a soul
  - \* They believed in life after death
- \* Importance of natural world (Circle of Life)
  - \* They had relatively little power over it

- \* Aboriginals decorated pipes, clothing, and masks
- \* They had painting and wampum belts
- \* Lacrosse and gambling were favourite pass times
- \* Story telling and oral history were very important
  - \* All knowledge, wisdom and history was passed down orally. (No written words)
  
- \* Torture
  - \* In warfare torture was a part of the culture. It was seen as a duty to torture captives of war. The prisoner was offered as vengeance, and the whole village participated in a long ceremony. The prisoner was to show his bravery on behalf of his people

# Exam Type Questions

- \* On a map, indicate the possible routes and transportation methods of the nomads who originally migrated to North America. (The Land Bridge Theory)
- \* What name has been given to the land between Asia and North America that was exposed during the last ice age? (Beringia)

PLICKERS!!

# Important Terms and Concepts in the Module

Matriarchy  
Longhouses  
Big Game  
Totem Poles  
Tadoussac  
Normans  
Animism  
Basques  
Wigwams  
Patriarchy  
Physiographic regions  
Shamans  
Gateways  
Elders  
Nomadic  
Sedentary  
Gift and Counter Gift Relationship  
Spirituality