

# Louisiana's Native People and Early European Explorers



Vocabulary Word Search



Internet Activity

## Chapter Preview

### People

Antoine Simon Le Page du Pratz; Hernando de Soto; Sarah McIlhenny; Pierre Le Moyne, Sieur d'Iberville

### Places

Charenton, Zwolle, Angola, Kinder

### Terms

artifact, prehistoric, archaeologist, midden, nomadic, atlatl, mound, agriculture, maize, immunity, tribe, treaty

Native Americans had been in the area that became Louisiana at least 10,000 years before the first Europeans arrived. French colonists like Antoine Simon Le Page du Pratz created writings and drawings that provide information about Louisiana's native people. Between 1718 and 1734, du Pratz met and observed members of several Native American tribes. He lived with a member of the Chitimacha tribe, and also lived with and learned the language of the Natchez. He recorded in great detail how Native Americans farmed, hunted, dressed, worshipped, celebrated, and buried their dead.

The Natchez developed a trading relationship with the French. Many members of the tribe wanted French trade goods like guns and blankets, but not all Natchez agreed that trade with the French was wise. Du Pratz recorded the concerns expressed by one Natchez elder: "Before the French came amongst us, we were men, content with what we had." Another Natchez chief believed that trading with the French meant only that his people had to set aside "part of our corn, our game, and fish, to give a part to them."





The Natchez had chosen their areas of settlement well. They lived on some of the most fertile land near the Mississippi River. In 1729, two powerful French officials ordered the Natchez to leave their White Apple village so they could turn the rich lands into a tobacco plantation. The Natchez responded by planning a raid on nearby French settlers. They struck on November 28, 1729, killing at least 200 French settlers and taking about 350 as hostages. Their raid was successful in scaring the French, but it did not settle the matter. Within a year, the French struck back at the Natchez with the help of Choctaw allies. By 1731, most remaining Natchez had been killed, captured, or absorbed into other tribes. The Natchez captives were sold as slaves to the French colony of Saint-Domingue.

As the story of the Natchez demonstrates, both cooperation and conflict took place in the early interactions between Native Americans and Europeans. The words and images that settlers like du Pratz left behind reveal rich and varied native cultures. Those same records remind us that Louisiana's native people were undergoing tremendous challenges and change as a result of the arrival and settlement of Europeans.

In this chapter, you will learn about prehistoric Native Americans, and how they differed from the historic tribes described by du Pratz. You will also learn about the people who lived in Louisiana at the time of French settlement, and how their lives were changed in the process of Louisiana's development.



**Background:** Chitimacha baskets.  
**Above:** *Communal Venison Hunt*, reproduced from *Histoire de la Louisiane*, a three-volume history of Louisiana illustrated and published by Antoine Simon Le Page du Pratz.  
**Opposite Page:** Members of the Choctaw tribe.

**Background:** A Choctaw ball game.  
**Below:** The Avoyelles Parish Courthouse.

# Signs of the Times



## Population

In 1492, the year Columbus landed in the New World, an estimated 2 to 18 million Native Americans lived in what is today North America. The estimated total human population in the world was 425 million.

## Food

Maize (corn) was grown as early as 7000 BC in Central America, the same time that agriculture first appeared in western Asia. Native Americans in Louisiana grew maize, beans, squash, and pumpkins.

## Literature

Native Americans followed the oral tradition of handing down stories from elders.

## Sports and Games

Many Native Americans played a game that used sticks to capture and move a ball to either end of a field. The Choctaw people called the game *toli*. In the colonial era, the game was sometimes used to settle disputes among Native American groups. French settlers developed their own version of the game, which they called *raquette*. It inspired the modern game of lacrosse. The Mississippi Choctaw continue to hold a *toli* tournament each summer as part of their annual fair.

## Native American Place Names

Louisiana has many towns, lakes, and bayous with Native American place names. Two of our largest rivers, the Mississippi (“Great River”) and Atchafalaya (“Long River”), were named by Native Americans. In addition, nine parishes have Native American names: Avoyelles, Calcasieu, Catahoula, Natchitoches, Ouachita, Plaquemines, St. Tammany (named for a Delaware tribal chief), Tangipahoa, and Tensas.



Timeline

30,000 BC to AD 2015

**30,000 - 15,000 BC** - Paleo people migrated from Siberia to North America

30,000 BC

**7500 BC** - Earth's climate changed; beginning of Meso era

7000 BC

**5000 BC** - Meso people began building mounds

**3000 BC** - Oldest mounds in Louisiana built

5000 BC

**2000 BC** - Early Neo era began

**1000 BC** - Neo people began to make pottery

2500 BC

New Stone Age began in Europe - **4000 BC**

Bronze Age began in Asia and Europe - **3500 BC**

Great Pyramid of Giza completed in Egypt - **2560 BC**

Stonehenge stone circle erected in England - **2300 BC**

Iron Age began - **1300 BC**

Greek city-states flourished - **750 BC**

Beginning of the Roman Empire - **30 BC**

**AD 500** - Development of the bow and arrow

0

**AD 500** - Ancestors of Chitimacha began to settle in villages along Bayou Teche

**AD 800** - Late Neo era began

AD 500

**AD 1000** - Viking Leif Erikson explored Vinland (Newfoundland, Canada)

**AD 1492** - Columbus made first voyage to the New World

**AD 1539** - Hernando de Soto began exploring southern region of today's United States

AD 1000

**AD 1600** - Late Neo era ended

**AD 1718** - Du Pratz first observed and interacted with several native tribes

AD 1500

**AD 1729** - Natchez killed 200 French settlers and took 350 as hostages

Inca people began building Machu Picchu in South America - **AD 1400**

Crew of Ferdinand Magellan, sailing for Spain, completed first circumnavigation of Earth - **AD 1522**

**AD 1835** - Caddo made a treaty with the United States

**AD 1917** - U.S. government recognized Chitimacha as a sovereign Indian nation

**AD 1973** - Coshatta received federal recognition

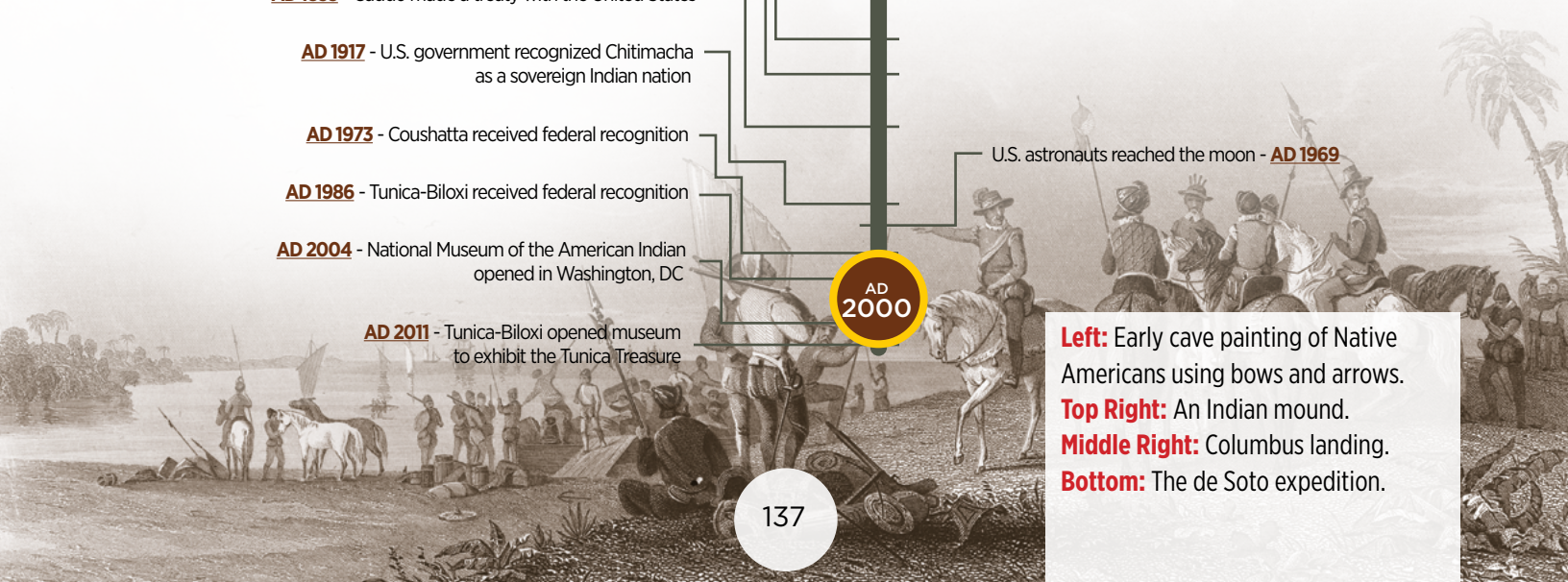
**AD 1986** - Tunica-Biloxi received federal recognition

**AD 2004** - National Museum of the American Indian opened in Washington, DC

AD 2000

U.S. astronauts reached the moon - **AD 1969**

**AD 2011** - Tunica-Biloxi opened museum to exhibit the Tunica Treasure



**Left:** Early cave painting of Native Americans using bows and arrows.  
**Top Right:** An Indian mound.  
**Middle Right:** Columbus landing.  
**Bottom:** The de Soto expedition.

## Section 1

## Prehistoric Cultures

## As you read, look for

- ▶ how archaeologists learn about prehistoric cultures;
- ▶ the characteristics of the Paleo, Meso, Early Neo, and Late Neo eras;
- ▶ developments in hunting, shelter building, and agriculture from 10,000 BC to AD 1600;
- ▶ terms: **artifact, prehistoric, archaeologist, midden, nomadic, atlatl, mound, agriculture, maize.**

a-z  
GLOSSARY

## Lagniappe

European explorers were the first to apply the term “Indian” to the native peoples of North America. They did so because they thought they had found a route to Asia and that the people they found were living in a country they knew as India. The Europeans were mistaken, but the term is still used today by scholars, archaeologists, and some native people. Other people prefer the term Native American. We will use both terms in this chapter.

The first people who lived in the area that is now Louisiana did not leave written records, but some of the items they used in their daily lives have survived, often buried deep in the ground. When these items are dug up, they are called **artifacts** (objects made by humans, especially ancient tools and weapons). **Prehistoric** (before the time of written history) people left behind the tools they used for hunting and making shelters, along with the items they used to prepare food or to conduct ceremonies. Taken all together, those items provide **archaeologists** (scientists who use artifacts from the past to try to understand prehistoric people) a window into how prehistoric people lived.

One place archaeologists find artifacts in large numbers is in **middens** (ancient garbage dumps). Using the material they recover, they can determine which groups of people left the items, when they left them, and how those people lived. It is possible to determine the age of these prehistoric artifacts by using a method called radiocarbon dating.



Organizing  
Information about  
Prehistoric Cultures

**Background:** From the size and condition of this Native American pottery, it is likely to date from the Late Neo era or even later.





**Top:** Paleo people crossing the land bridge from Siberia to Alaska.

Archaeologists have to piece together a record of the past from partial data. Their work is like putting together a jigsaw puzzle with many of the pieces missing. They try to understand the full picture by relying on the partial artifact record. When they find a new piece of the puzzle, they can fill in more blanks. Sometimes, they even change their previous conclusions based on this new information.

Based on differences in the artifact record and what it suggests about how life was changing over time, archaeologists have separated Louisiana’s prehistory into four eras. We can use these four eras to divide the past into segments that show similarities. This helps us understand how prehistoric people lived.

### Paleo Era

The first people to live in Louisiana date to a period called the Paleo era. (The word *paleo* means “ancient.” The word *era* refers to a long period of time.) Scientists believe these people first traveled to North America from Asia across a land bridge that once connected today’s state of Alaska and the region of Russia called Siberia. This migration is believed to have begun as early as 30,000 BC, followed by subsequent waves of migrants who arrived in North America by 15,000 BC.

These people traveled in small groups and moved around to follow animals they hunted. The Paleo people hunted very large animals, including an ancient relative of the elephant called a mastodon. Incredibly, they managed to kill these huge animals using only spears made from wooden poles topped with sharpened stones called spear heads or tips. Archaeologists think the Paleo people traded for these stones in areas as far away as Arkansas and Texas.

### Lagniappe

All living things have both carbon-12 and radioactive carbon-14 in their bodies. The ratio of 12 to 14 is the same for every living thing at the time of death. After death, the carbon-14 decays but the carbon-12 does not. By measuring the ratio of 12 to 14 in a sample and comparing it to what it would have been at the time of death, scientists can determine the age of the artifact.

### Lagniappe

The initials BC stand for “before Christ.” The initials AD stand for the Latin words *anno Domini*, which mean “in the year of the Lord.” Another way of expressing dates is BCE (before the Common Era) and CE (of the Common Era).

Paleo people ate the meat from the animals they killed and used their skins to make clothing, blankets, and coverings for their shelters. Because they followed the animals as they moved seasonally, their shelters were temporary. When groups of Paleo people reached what is today Louisiana, they found many of the kinds of animals they needed to survive. They also discovered plants and water-based creatures they could eat as well.

## Meso Era

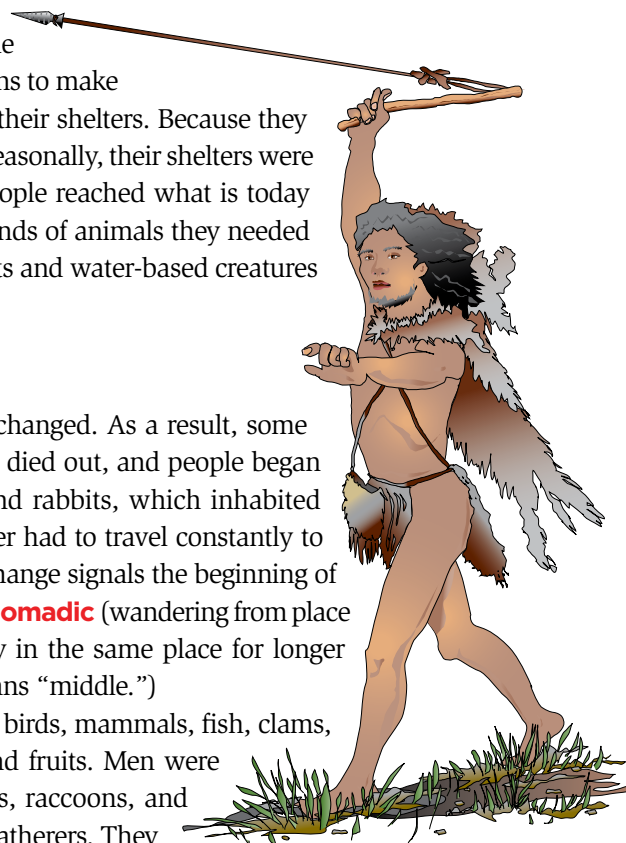
Around 7500 BC, Earth's climate changed. As a result, some very large animals like the mastodon died out, and people began to hunt smaller animals like deer and rabbits, which inhabited smaller areas. Native people no longer had to travel constantly to keep up with migrating herds. This change signals the beginning of the Meso era, where people were still **nomadic** (wandering from place to place), but were beginning to stay in the same place for longer periods of time. (The word *meso* means "middle.")

Louisiana's environment provided birds, mammals, fish, clams, reptiles, seeds, roots, nuts, grains, and fruits. Men were the hunters. They killed deer, rabbits, raccoons, and squirrels for food. Women were the gatherers. They collected acorns, hickory nuts, pecans, persimmons, elderberries, and huckleberries.

The Meso people changed their hunting methods and tools to adapt to smaller game. They developed a spear-throwing device called an atlatl. An **atlatl** was a shaft of wood with a small cup or groove on the end. The base of a spear fit into that cup. The atlatl allowed hunters to throw the spear with greater speed and accuracy. This tool helped them target the smaller, faster animals they now depended on for food. In addition to atlatls, their improved tools included axes and *awls* (long, sharp spikes used to pierce holes in wood or leather).

## Lagniappe

Two kinds of elephant-like creatures roamed North America during the Paleo era—mastodons and woolly mammoths. Mastodons lived mostly in the forests of the East. Their cone-shaped molars were designed to crush the leaves, twigs, and bark that served as their food. Mammoths mostly lived in the open grasslands of the West. Their molars had ridges—like the bottom of a sneaker—that allowed them to chew up five hundred pounds of vegetation a day.

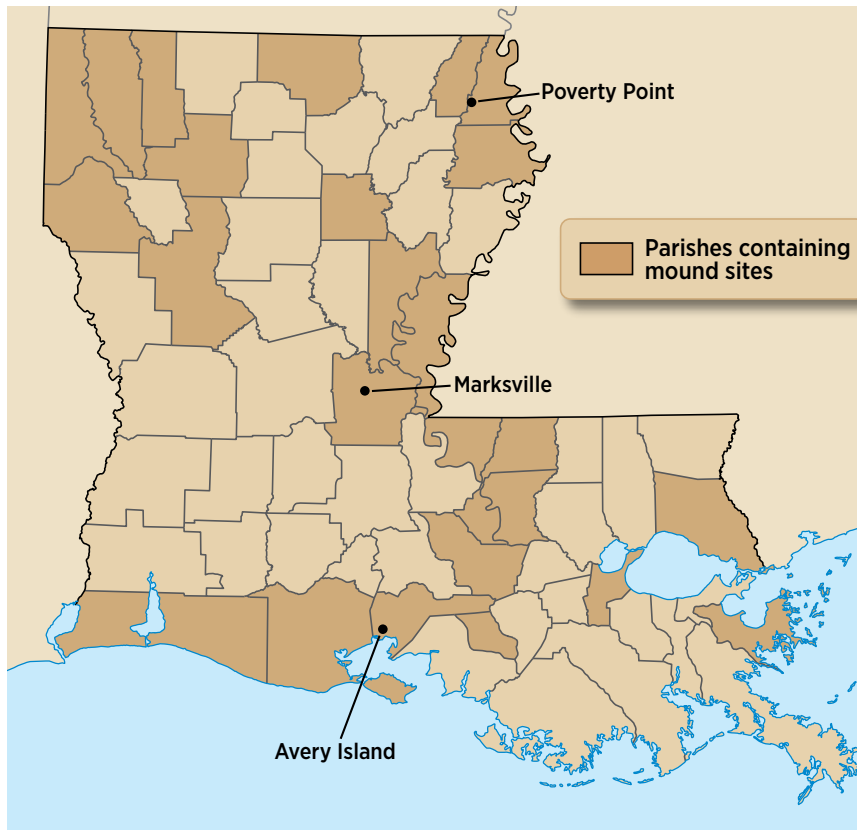


**Top Right:** A Meso native using an atlatl. **Above:** A woolly mammoth (left) and an American mastodon (right) facing each other, showing the physical differences between the two animals. **Bottom Right:** Huckleberries.





Because Meso people moved around less, their shelters changed as well. They became sturdier because they were meant to last longer. Meso people covered wood posts with branches or other plant materials they wove together. As they settled for longer periods, they also began to build earthen structures, some of which have lasted into the modern period. Meso people began building these artificial hills, called **mounds**, as early as 5000 BC. The oldest mounds in Louisiana date to about 3000 BC. Archaeologists believe the earliest mounds were used for special ceremonies, but not for burials.



**MAP 5.1**

**Mound Sites in Louisiana**

**Map Skill:** Is there a mound site in your parish? If not, in which parish would you find the mound that is closest to your home?

The artifact record for Meso people is richer than for Paleo people. Archaeological expeditions, called *digs* because they bring the artifacts up from inside the earth, have discovered stones that were shaped and polished for use as jewelry or decoration. Meso people left behind bone needles and fishing hooks, baskets, beads, hairpins, tortoise shell rattles, and shell ornaments.

**Top:** A Housatonic hut at the Vermilionville folklife park.



# Special FEATURE

**Background:** Steps lead to the top of the Bird Mound. **Below:** An aerial view of Poverty Point. **Bottom:** These clay cooking balls were found at the Poverty Point site.

## The Mystery of Poverty Point

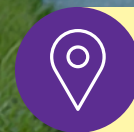
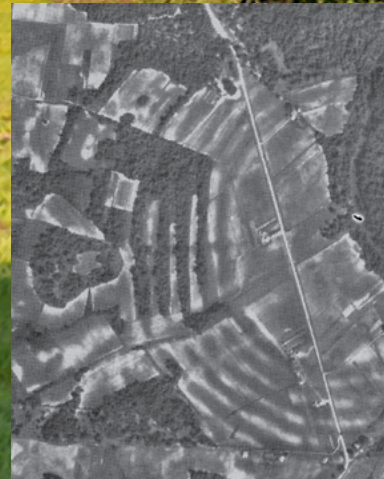
Imagine flying over an area in northeastern Louisiana, about fifteen miles from the Mississippi River, and looking down on six large semicircular ridges on a bluff overlooking Bayou Maçon. These ridges are part of the Poverty Point State Historic Site in West Carroll Parish. The earthen structures were built between 1700 BC and 1100 BC. You won't find any other Native American structures of this size or age in the Western Hemisphere! The mounds were begun before the Mayans of Mexico started building their pyramids or the Inca their cities and roads.

Poverty Point's six semicircular ridges—located one behind the other and divided by four aisles—create a “C” shape and cover an area larger than a square mile. It is estimated that the ridges were once at least five feet high, but have been worn down by erosion and plowing over the centuries. In addition to the ridges, the site contains several other mounds. The largest of these, Mound A, is called the Bird Mound because it has the shape of a bird when seen from above. Archaeologists have determined that none of these Poverty Point mounds were used for burials. It is believed that the ridges were bases for homes.

The artifacts discovered at Poverty Point have led archaeologists to believe that the site was a massive trade center. Stone from the Ozark Mountains, Ohio and Tennessee River valleys, and Appalachian Mountains in Georgia have been discovered there. By 600 BC, the Poverty Point culture had disappeared. Archaeologists are not sure why the culture vanished.

The site gets its name from a plantation that occupied the same land in the nineteenth century. The National Park Service has named Poverty Point a National Monument, but there are no federal facilities. The Louisiana Department of Culture, Recreation and Tourism operates Poverty Point as a State Historic Site and conducts tours March through October.

In June of 2014, Poverty Point received the great honor of being selected as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Of the 1,001 UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) World Heritage Sites around the globe—such as Stonehenge in England and the Great Wall of China—only 22 are located in the United States. Poverty Point will be the first in Louisiana! What do you think this prestigious selection will mean for this area of northeastern Louisiana?



Poverty Point



## Early Neo Era

The shift from the Meso to the Early Neo era took place around 2000 BC. (The word *neo* means “new.”) Although Meso people left many artifacts, Early Neo people left behind an even wider variety of goods. Importantly, around 1000 BC, Neo people began to make pottery. Archaeologists have found large numbers of *shards* (broken pieces of pottery) at sites all around the state. The pottery varied a great deal. Some of it was very plain and probably made for everyday use. Some was decorated with complex artistic designs. These vessels may have been used in ceremonies.

The Early Neo people also made other kinds of items with decorative or ceremonial purposes. Archaeologists have discovered copper ear spools and bracelets, beads, pendants made from animal teeth, pottery pipes, and small human and animal figurines. Many of these items seem to have been treasured by their owners, since they were buried with people after they died.

The development of the bow and arrow around AD 500 is another advancement of this period. The bow was made from soft wood, like hickory, that could be bent into the right shape. The strings were made from stretched deer tendons. The arrow was also made from local wood and topped with a sharpened stone, called an arrowhead.

During this 2,800-year period, people began living together in larger groups. They established villages and stayed in them as long as food in the area was abundant. When food became scarce, they would move to another site temporarily. Besides animals like deer or birds, the Neo people ate wild fruits, like grapes, and a wild grain called amaranth. Amaranth is a seed-bearing plant that is rarely eaten today. Fish, shellfish, and oysters added more variety to their diet.



## Lagniappe

Amaranth is starting to make a comeback among healthy eaters. This tiny pseudograin (false grain) has more protein than most grains, is high in iron and other minerals, and contains vitamin C. Amaranth is also good for the heart and is naturally gluten-free. It's no wonder many consider it the “food of the future.”



**Top Right:** Amaranth.  
**Bottom:** Arrowheads.

# Special FEATURE

## Marksville's Ancient Past

Located in Avoyelles Parish, near the city of Alexandria, is the Marksville State Historic Site. The site is situated on a bluff overlooking the Old River and covers forty-two acres of land. Archaeologists first began studying the site in 1926. They believe that it was a prehistoric Native American ceremonial center. Based on their investigations, archaeologists determined that the people who built the mounds at Marksville were part of the Hopewell culture. This culture was centered in the Ohio River valley and was known for its ceremonies and extensive trade networks. Construction of the site began about 2,000 years ago, but all that remains are some earthworks and mounds.

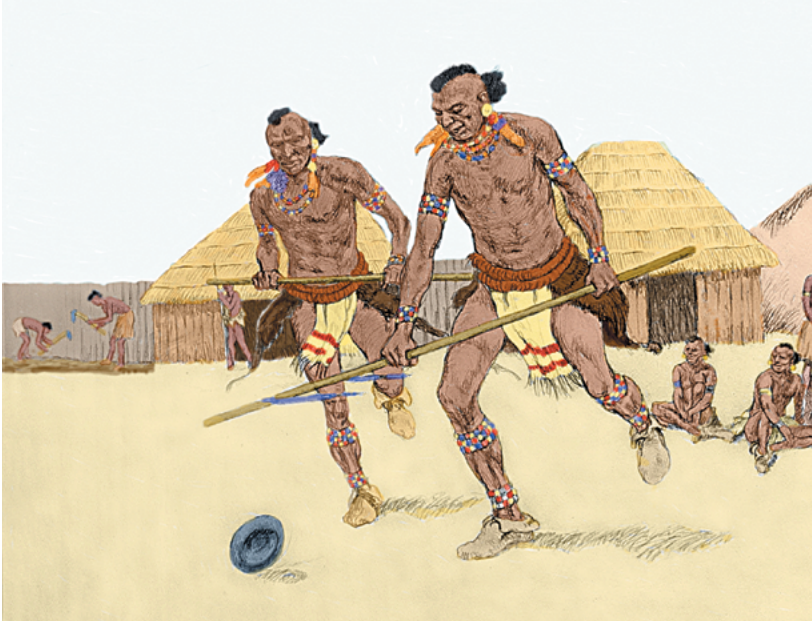
A horseshoe-shaped wall of earth that stretches for 3,300 feet and ranges between 3 and 7 feet tall surrounds the ancient site. That's about the same length as 11 football fields! The open side of the horseshoe is the edge of a bluff along Old River. Because there are several openings in the earthworks, archaeologists believe that the purpose of the site was for ceremonies, not defense. The wall was probably built to create a separate area for burial, as well as a place to conduct formal affairs.

Within the walls, there are six mounds that range in size and shape. More mounds are located outside the walls. The tallest mound, known as Mound 4, has a diameter of 100 feet, is 30 feet tall, and was used for burials. Mound 5 is aligned to certain movements of the sun, moon, and stars. Remember, there were no bulldozers to help with the project. The natives had only primitive stone and wooden tools. What purposes might there have been for putting so much effort into the construction of the earthworks?



Old River  
Early Mississippi River  
Channel 4000-2500b c





## Late Neo Era

The Late Neo era began about AD 800 and ended around AD 1600. During this period, native villages became even larger, and houses were made more permanent. Now they were built from *wattle and daub* (woven sticks covered with a layer of mud). Late Neo people also continued to build mounds. In this period, they also began to build temples on them. These so-called temple mounds were used for sacred ceremonies. There was often an open plaza between two or more mounds that was used for ceremonies and other gatherings. Late Neo era villages grew in size and were often located near waterways, which the villagers used both for travel and as a source for food.

The Late Neo people switched from gathering to **agriculture** (settled farming). By this time, some groups began to live in the same place year-round. This allowed them to plant and harvest crops. Their main crops were **maize** (corn), beans, squash, and pumpkins. The Late Neo people developed a planting method called *intercropping*. This involved planting two or more crops with different harvest times in the same plot of land. For example, beans and pumpkins could sprout, grow, and be ready to harvest before corn in the same plot could mature. This method allowed the Neo people to harvest three crops from the same area in a single planting season.

Life changed a great deal for Native Americans between 30,000 BC and AD 1600. The encounter with Europeans accelerated those changes.



Identify the Correct Era



Cultural Encounter

## Reviewing the Section

1. Define in sentence form: prehistoric, archaeologist, nomadic.
2. When did the large animals like mastodons begin to die out? Why did this happen?
3. How did the Late Neo people practice agriculture?

**Top:** These Late Neo Indians are playing a game called chunky. The object of the game was to roll a disc-shaped stone across the ground and throw a spear at it in an attempt to place the spear as close as possible to the stopping place of the stone.

## Section 2

# Historic Native American Tribes

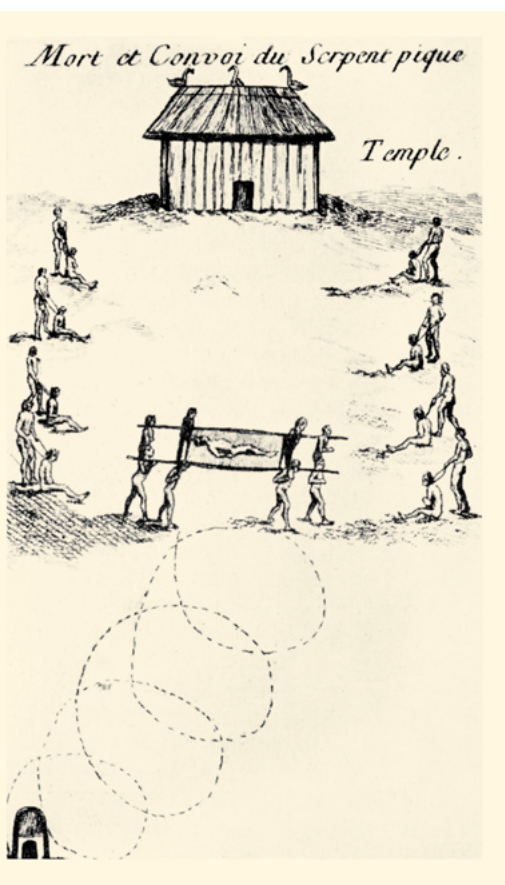
## As you read, look for

- ▶ how the arrival of European explorers and settlers both challenged and changed the Native Americans living in Louisiana;
- ▶ characteristics of the tribes that the European explorers encountered in Louisiana;
- ▶ terms: **immunity, tribe, treaty.**

a-z  
GLOSSARY



Analyzing a Primary Source: George Caitlin's Letter



**Left:** Antoine Simon Le Page du Pratz drawing of burial rites. **Right:** Du Pratz drawing of a winter hunt.

**Opposite Page, Top Right:** This 1853 William Henry Powell painting called *Discovery of the Mississippi by De Soto* is displayed in the rotunda of the U.S. Capitol.

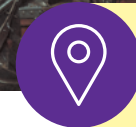
The shift from prehistoric to historic cultures is marked by the arrival of the written word. In North America, the historic period began when European explorers and settlers encountered and began to make written records about the native people's life and customs. Of course, the Native Americans had a history of their own, but they had passed down stories and important information about life through the oral tradition of storytelling. This handed down the important truths to each new generation, but left no written records behind.

Explorers from Spain and France made the first written records about the life and customs of Native Americans. Europeans were most interested in what they were observing in the present. They wrote letters home and also kept detailed journals and records of their travels and the people they found. Unfortunately, the earliest Europeans did not understand native languages. They also misunderstood or misinterpreted the significance of Native American customs and practices because these new cultures were so different from their own. Although the historical records about Native Americans are imperfect, they give us some ability to understand the native people who called Louisiana home.



## Spanish Encounters with Native Americans

Spanish explorer Hernando de Soto traveled from Havana, Cuba, and began exploring the southern region of the modern United States in 1539, looking for gold. He arrived with hundreds of soldiers, horses, bloodhounds, and pigs. The Spanish also brought diseases with them to North America. Although this was unintentional, the native people had no **immunity** (natural resistance) to these European illnesses. Over the next two centuries, diseases like influenza and smallpox killed nearly half of the Native American population.



Burial of DeSoto

### Lagniappe

Hernando de Soto encouraged the natives he came across to believe he was a sun god who would live forever. When he died in 1542 near the Mississippi River, his men had to conceal his death. They hid his body in blankets weighted with sand, and sank it in the middle of the Mississippi River at night.



MAP 5.2

### De Soto's Expedition

**Map Skill:** Through which present-day states did de Soto and his survivors travel?

## French Encounters with Native Americans

Around 1700, when the French had begun to explore and settle, they sometimes came upon empty villages. Although they did not understand why, these villages had been abandoned when influenza, measles, smallpox, or cholera swept through. Once these *epidemics* (widespread diseases) arrived, they could quickly kill all or most of the people in a village. Those who survived often fled. Sadly, they carried the European diseases to other groups of people and villages, repeating the process begun by the encounter with the Spanish.

### Lagniappe

A vaccine against smallpox was developed in 1796 by an English doctor named Edward Jenner. The smallpox vaccine has been so successful that, in 1980, the World Health Organization declared that the disease was *eradicated* (wiped out) from the earth.

Despite the deaths of nearly half the native population, the French settlers and explorers identified a number of tribes. They wrote down the tribal names according to how they heard the native people describe themselves. A **tribe** is a group of native people who share a name, common ancestry, language, and way of living.

The French sometimes made mistakes in identifying tribes because, at first, they did not understand their languages or the traits that made groups distinct from one another. Although tribes spoke many different languages, most could communicate in a common language called Mobilian. This language was used for trade and was made up from a combination of Choctaw words and commonly understood signs and gestures.

### Historic Tribes

When the French arrived in what is present-day Louisiana, they encountered seven major tribal groups. Some groups had to move to new locations as a result of European settlement. Virtually all Native Americans began to use European trade goods in their everyday life. Many of these goods, like pots and blankets, made life easier. Other items, like guns, changed the way Native Americans hunted. They also changed the way tribal groups fought among themselves. This new kind of warfare affected the previous alliances and understandings the tribes had with one another.

All native people experienced these changes, but, for some, these changes were more harmful than for others. The Atakapa and the

Natchez were two of the seven tribal groups that existed in Louisiana at the time of European settlement. Both of them had ceased to exist by the 1730s. The five other native groups were the Caddo, Chitimacha, Choctaw, Houma, and Tunica peoples. In later years, the Tunica would merge with the Biloxi and become known as the Tunica-Biloxi tribe. The Coushatta, another distinct tribe, moved to Louisiana by the early 1800s. Despite the many challenges they faced, the six tribes that remain in Louisiana today have been able to maintain their identity and culture as distinct people. The following sections provide a brief history of all eight of these historic Native American groups.

#### MAP 5.3

#### Historic Louisiana Tribes

**Map Skill:** According to the map, which tribal groups lived along the Mississippi River?



## Atakapa

The Atakapa lived in the southwest corner of modern Louisiana. Early European observers considered the Atakapa very *primitive* (not advanced). Their tribal name meant “eaters of flesh” in Choctaw. Their *cannibalistic* (human flesh eating) practices were probably confined to eating the body parts of an enemy they had killed in the belief that they could absorb that person’s power. The Atakapa suffered greatly from European disease. The small numbers who survived epidemic disease were eventually driven from their tribal homes by French and Spanish settlers.

## Natchez

The primary village of the Natchez people was called Grand Village. It was located on the eastern bluffs above the Mississippi River near present-day Natchez, Mississippi. The related Taensa and Avoyel tribes lived downriver on the opposite bank. The Europeans described the Natchez as fearsome warriors who lived in large, protected villages. By 1700, disease had already taken a toll, and many Natchez had separated into smaller villages.

The Natchez had a highly developed class structure. A king sat at the top of the social order. He was known as the “Great Sun,” and was carried around on an elaborate stretcher called a litter. He also had several wives. He even held the power of life and death over his subjects. When he died, other members of the tribe were killed or buried with him.

High-ranking people in the middle of Natchez society were called *nobles*. The people at the bottom were called *stinkards*. Whatever their social status, tattoos were a common part of the culture and virtually everyone had them.

Besides decorating their bodies with tattoos, the Natchez also liked to adorn their clothing with accessories like red belts made from dyed opossum fur. Europeans remarked about the elaborate clothing worn by Natchez women. The women created a distinctive fabric, similar to modern-day linen, from mulberry bark. They were creative in pottery-making as well. They discovered they could strengthen their pottery by adding Spanish moss to their clay.



## Lagniappe

Spanish moss is not a true moss at all but a relative of the pineapple. Native Americans called it “tree hair.” French explorers called it “Spanish beard” to insult their New World rivals. “Spanish moss” is a milder variation of the French insult.

**Top:** The title of this engraving in English is *An Indian of the Northwest of Louisiana*. **Bottom:** Spanish moss.



## Lagniappe

There had been horses in North America in prehistoric times, but they died out about the same time as the mastodons and mammoths. The Spanish *conquistadors* (conquerors) reintroduced horses to the continent beginning in 1519. As horses escaped or were sold and traded, they gradually spread across the western plains. Native Americans became skilled at riding and at hunting on horseback.

The Natchez chose the location of their villages very skillfully. They settled near abundant populations of deer, bison, bear, porcupine, and birds. They also gathered fruits and vegetables and grew crops in the rich soil located near the Mississippi River.

Unfortunately, their rich lands were very attractive to some French settlers. In 1729, the French governor and the commandant of a fort near the Natchez White Apple Village ordered the inhabitants off their land. The French wanted to turn the fertile Natchez lands into a tobacco plantation. This chapter began with an account of the tragic events that followed. The few Natchez who survived into the 1730s could not reestablish villages for fear of French *reprisal* (“getting back,” revenge). They became part of other groups like the Creek and Cherokee, and the Natchez tribe came to an end.

### Caddo

The Caddo, or Kadohadacho, were a specific tribe, but the French applied the name to an entire group of tribes, including the Natchitoches and the Ouachita. The Caddo had settled along the Red River and its tributaries by the time Europeans arrived. Before that, they had lived in the area that became Arkansas. On a modern map, Caddo Lake and Caddo Parish are named for this tribe.

The Caddo were traders. One trade good they had a lot of was salt, which they were able to trade for horses with other tribes on the western plains. Later, they traded horses to their eastern neighbors, the Tunica. The Caddo became skilled with their horses and used them both in trade and hunting. Fish from the lakes, rivers, and creeks near their settlements had long provided food, but the Caddo were also farmers. In addition to crops like corn and beans, they also raised cattle, hogs, and poultry.



Caddo Heritage



Caddo Heritage



Higher Level Thinking:  
A Buffalo Hunt

**Above:** Indians of the western plains hunted buffalo on horseback. The Caddo traded their plentiful salt to western tribesmen for horses.

**Bottom:** Caddo Lake, named for the Caddo tribe, spans the border between Louisiana and Texas.



Because of their location, the Caddo were affected by border disputes between the French and Spanish, and, later, between the Spanish and the United States. After the United States purchased Louisiana, the Caddo began to trade with the Americans. To do this, they had to accept United States trade regulations. Unfortunately, the trade goods provided to the Caddo were often in short supply or of poor quality. In 1835, the Caddo made a **treaty** (a formal agreement between two or more nations) with the United States. The Caddo agreed to sell more than a million acres of their land for \$80,000. Part was to be paid in cash and the balance to be paid in trade goods. The lands they sold stretched from DeSoto Parish north to Texarkana. After the sale, the Caddo moved west and joined related tribes in Texas. The Caddo were forced to move yet again when the Texans, like the Europeans and Americans before them, wanted to settle these areas. They began pushing out Native Americans including the Caddo.

Today, the Caddo people live together as the United Caddo Nation on a reservation in Oklahoma. Despite a history filled with hardship, the Caddo have retained many of their ancient cultural practices. They have preserved dozens of traditional songs, and they hold yearly dances that commemorate important parts of their culture. They also have organizations on the reservation that pass along traditional art forms, like pottery-making, to the next generation of Caddo people.



### Chitimacha

The Chitimacha date their origins to about AD 500, when their ancestors began to settle in villages along Bayou Teche. At its height, their population exceeded 20,000 people scattered across 15 villages in southern Louisiana. The Chitimacha were ruled by a male chief who had authority



over all the villages. The chief inherited his position. Children belonged to their mother's *clan* (a group of people who have a shared identity and descend from a single ancestor). Although women could serve as healers and hold positions of power, they could not have positions of religious authority. The Chitimacha developed music and dances to observe important occasions. People from different villages gathered for dancing and singing that lasted for several days at a time.

**Top:** Official Seal of the Caddo Nation.  
**Bottom:** Chitimacha former chief and historian Nick Stouff of Charenton.

**Below:** François Bernard painted this *Portrait of Two Chitimacha Indians* in 1870. **Bottom:** The Chitimacha run the Cypress Bayou Casino in Charenton.



By the time the French began to settle Louisiana, the number of Chitimacha had already been greatly reduced by epidemic sickness. In the early 1700s, the Chitimacha had a twelve-year conflict with the French and their Native American allies. This reduced their population even further. The Chitimacha eventually made peace with the French, and the largest remaining group settled near Grand Lake in modern-day St. Mary Parish.

In 1762, Acadian refugees were resettled near the Chitimacha. Over time, some members of the two groups intermarried, and French became a common language among those families.

Despite intermarriage, many Chitimacha maintained a distinct identity, but the group continued to face challenges. In 1855, a severe epidemic of *yellow fever* (a deadly disease spread by the bite of an infected mosquito) caused many deaths. In the same period, the Chitimacha sued the United States government. They wanted confirmation of their claims to traditional tribal lands. The tribe gained formal title to more than 1,000 acres, but hard times had forced some members of their tribe to sell parts of that land. In the early twentieth century, the tribe retained less than 300 acres.

A neighbor of the Chitimacha named Sarah McIlhenny, a resident of nearby Avery Island, bought part of the lost land and helped the Chitimacha regain control of it. In 1917, the United States government recognized the Chitimacha as a sovereign Indian nation. They were the first tribe in Louisiana to achieve this status. In 1917, the reservation consisted of 260 acres. Over the years, the Chitimacha have purchased adjacent property, adding another 1,000 acres to their holdings.

In the early 1970s, the tribe adopted a constitution and bylaws. Today the tribe has about 950 members and is governed by a five-member tribal council. Approximately 350 members live on the reservation near Charenton, in St. Mary Parish. The reservation has its own schools, courts, and police and fire departments. The tribe also runs a successful casino and uses the profits to provide a variety of benefits to its members.



## Choctaw

When Europeans arrived, the Choctaw were the second-largest tribe in the southeastern United States. They occupied an area that includes parts of present-day Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana. They lived in permanent towns, engaged in settled agriculture, and developed extensive trade routes.

Long-standing conflicts between the French and the British continued when both nations began to colonize parts of North America. The Europeans wanted the tribes to choose sides. The Choctaw initially allied with the French. The Chickasaw, long-time enemies of the Choctaw, chose to support the British. These new alliances increased conflict between the two tribes. After the French and Indian War ended in 1763, the Choctaw split into two factions, one allied with the French and the other with the British. This new set of alliances led to a war within the tribe. Some Choctaw supported the American colonies against the British in the American Revolutionary War. A small group also supported Andrew Jackson and the U.S. forces at the Battle of New Orleans in 1815.

By the 1830s, the Choctaw had made agreements to *cede* (give up) most of their territory to the United States. Today, most descendants of the Choctaw live on reservations in Oklahoma and Mississippi, but three groups of Choctaw remain in Louisiana. The Jena Band of Choctaw is recognized as a tribe by the United States. Their tribal center is located in Grant Parish. Tribal members retain and pass down their language, skills, and crafts to members of the younger generation. Young Choctaw are taught how to make blowguns, prepare deer hides, and design and make elaborate baskets from oak and pine straw. The second Louisiana group is the Clifton Choctaw, who live in Rapides Parish.

The third group is the Ebarb-Choctaw-Apache tribe. They are also known as the Louisiana Band of Choctaw. Their tribal office is located in Zwolle in Sabine Parish. In the 1700s, the Spanish brought some native people from the Apache tribe into the region to serve as slaves. Some of the Apache escaped or were freed, and joined a group of Choctaw who lived near the Sabine River. The culture of the Louisiana Band of Choctaw is a mixture of their Native American and Spanish heritages. In 1975, they began the Zwolle Tamale Fiesta to celebrate both sources of their heritage. It takes place every year on the second full weekend of October.



### Constitution of the Choctaw Nation

## Lagniappe

Though Zwolle has a mixed Native American and Spanish heritage, its name comes from the European country of Holland, home of the Dutch people. In the late 1800s, when the area became a whistle stop along the Kansas City Southern Railroad, it was given the name of a town in Holland to honor a prominent Dutch visitor.



### Choctaw



**Above:** François Bernard painted this *Choctaw Village* in 1869. **Bottom:** Zwolle Tamale Fiesta parade.



## Houma

René-Robert Cavalier, Sieur de La Salle, the French explorer who claimed Louisiana for France, encountered the Houma people on his journey down the Mississippi River in 1682. At that time, their primary village consisted of about 140 cabins. It was located near the river at modern-day Angola in West Feliciana Parish. The Houma were forced to leave this location after they lost a conflict with the Tunica. They moved to the south, settling first at Bayou St. John near New Orleans. Later they moved to Ascension Parish. They sold the Ascension Parish land to Acadian settlers and ended up in coastal marsh areas located in Terrebonne Parish.

Because of their location near swamps and marshes, they learned to hunt, fish, and trap local animals like the crawfish. In fact, the crawfish is their *totem* (tribal symbol). Earlier, the Houma had adopted a tribal symbol called an Istrouma or Isti Houma. This tall red pole was located on the banks of the Mississippi River and marked the boundary between the hunting grounds of the Houma and the Bayagoula. The French explorer Pierre Le Moyne, Sieur d'Iberville, saw the Istrouma and called it *baton rouge*, French for "red stick." The name of Louisiana's capital city commemorates this early Houma totem and Iberville's name for it.

Today, the Houma people live mainly in Terrebonne and Lafourche Parishes. They currently number about 15,000 people. During the years they moved around Louisiana, they intermarried with Native Americans from other tribes. This mixing of different tribal groups helped the Houma to survive, but it has also made it hard for them to prove a distinct ancestry. Because of their proximity to Acadian settlers and their descendants, some Houma speak French and have adopted some Acadian cultural traits.

The Houma are recognized as a tribe by the state of Louisiana. In order to provide federal recognition, the United States Bureau of Indian Affairs requires a tribe to prove a common ancestry. The tribe must also have lived in a distinctive community and maintained political influence over their members. According to the Bureau, the Houma do not meet these requirements. Despite this decision, the Houma continue their quest to achieve federal recognition.



Houma



**Top:** Official Seal of the United Houma Nation. **Right:** Alfred Boisseau painted *Louisiana Indians Walking Along a Bayou* in 1847.

The Houma maintain a community center at Dulac, where they pass on the old ways, including lessons in traditional weaving and woodcarving. They also continue to make traditional palmetto baskets. These beautiful braided baskets were born of necessity when the Houma used plants from the nearby swamps to make the containers they needed.



### Tunica-Biloxi

The people known today as the Tunica-Biloxi originally lived in Mississippi. The Tunica were driven into Louisiana when the Chickasaw moved into their territory. The Biloxi were forced inland when the French settled near their Gulf Coast villages. By the 1780s, both tribes had settled in Avoyelles Parish, near Natchitoches. The Spanish gave them a land grant that promised they could remain where they were and keep their land.

The Tunica were skilled and successful traders. They located their settlements near waterways that allowed them to travel long distances to trade with other tribes. Salt was one of their major trade goods, but they also traded arrow points, flint, and horses. Early Tunica traders used shell beads, quartz, and pearls as a form of money. They kept track of their trades through an accounting method that included bundling together sticks and putting knots in string to represent the numbers and kinds of goods they traded.

The Tunica were governed by two chiefs. Their peace chief led tribal affairs, while a war chief was their military leader. Their totem was the rattlesnake. The Tunica used their skills as traders to gain respect and to try to control their relationships with French and Spanish settlers. In addition to trading, the Tunica also hunted, farmed, and fished. They not only supplied their own needs, but also had surplus food and animal hides to trade with the French. In 1722, a French priest observed that the Tunica chief had learned “the art of laying up money” with the profits he gained by supplying the French with horses and food.



## Lagniappe

The town of Dulac, located only twelve miles from the Gulf of Mexico, has been severely affected by coastal erosion. In the past twenty-five years, seven major hurricanes have come through the community. Forty percent of the town’s population was lost between 2000 and 2010. The Dulac Community Center has helped those residents who remain build their houses higher and stronger to help the community resist future storms.

## Lagniappe

The Tunica Treasure is the largest collection of eighteenth-century Native American relics ever discovered. Its artifacts include musket parts, iron tools, jewelry, French and tribal pottery, and over 200,000 European trade beads. It was discovered, beginning in 1968, by a 26-year-old penitentiary guard who had a great interest in early Louisiana history.



Tunica

**Top:** Dulac after a hurricane.  
**Left:** A Tunica-Biloxi settlement.



In 1986, after fifty years of effort, the Tunica-Biloxi achieved formal recognition from the United States government. They live on a reservation in Avoyelles Parish and govern their own affairs. They own and run a large casino and have used its profits to improve the quality of life for their members. They have a large administrative center and a museum that opened in 2011 to exhibit a collection called the Tunica Treasure. The collection includes many examples of the kinds of goods the Tunica traded so successfully with the French and Spanish.

### Coughatta

The Coughatta people (Koasati in their language) originated in modern-day Tennessee. They moved east in the 1540s in an attempt to avoid further contact with Spanish explorers. The Coughatta stayed in modern-day Alabama for more than a century, but moved yet again, this time to avoid conflict with migrating English settlers. By the early 1800s, about 900 Coughatta had migrated to Louisiana. As their ancestors had, they changed the location of villages to avoid being drawn into the territorial disputes among Spain,



Coughatta

**Top to Bottom:** Coughatta youth playing a pipe; present-day Coughatta Indians; hut built by the Coughatta.

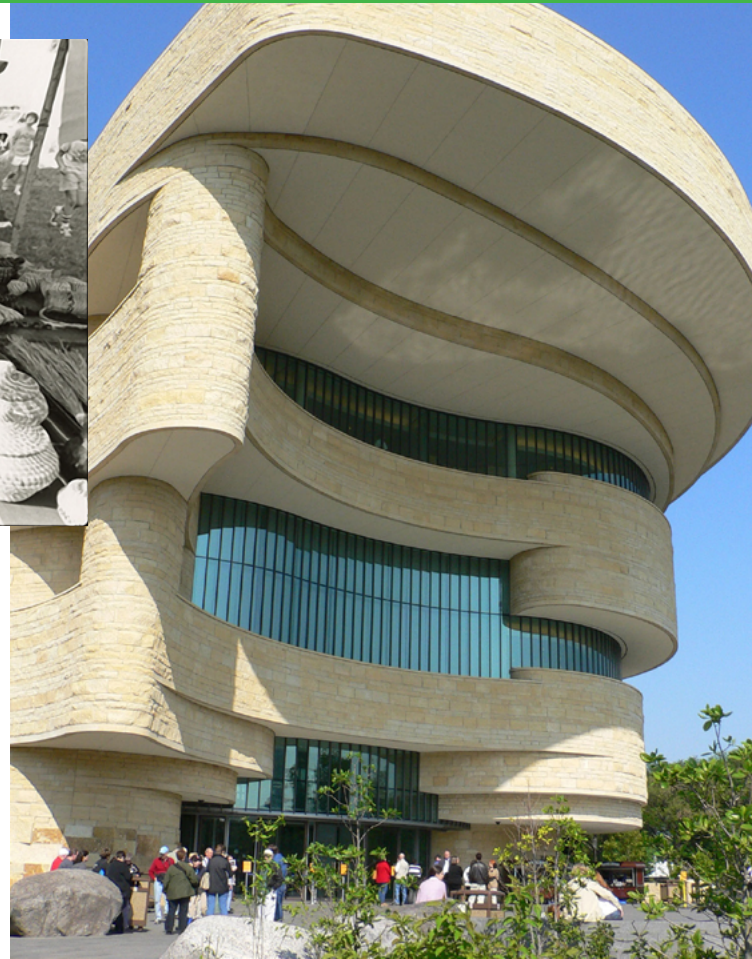
Mexico, England, and the United States. In the 1880s, the Coughatta purchased land and settled in south-central Louisiana, where they remain today. Their reservation is located north of Elton and east of Kinder in Allen Parish.



The Coushatta had a difficult relationship with the United States government in the twentieth century. Despite ongoing disagreements, the tribe persisted and received federal recognition in 1973. Once it was recognized as a sovereign nation, the Coushatta began investing in a variety of enterprises. Their most economically successful one is the Coushatta Casino Resort. Tribal members also raise rice, crawfish, and cattle on tribal lands. This tribe of approximately 865 members owns 5,000 acres in Allen Parish, and 1,000 more in neighboring parishes.

One cultural achievement for which the Coushatta are well known is the weaving of intricate baskets from the needles of long-leaf pine trees. At one time, the baskets were made for everyday use. Today, the skill and dedication required to make these intricately designed woven baskets is widely recognized. Coushatta baskets are highly prized by both museums and collectors. A collection of Coushatta baskets is included in a permanent display at the National Museum of the American Indian in Washington, DC.

The lives of Louisiana's native people changed profoundly as a result of European settlement. Each group learned a great deal from the other, but not all of those lessons were positive or peaceful. In the era of European settlement and afterwards, Native Americans continued to exist, but their lives began to be shaped by new people and by forces beyond their control.



## Lagniappe

The National Museum of the American Indian (NMAI), which opened on the National Mall near the U.S. Capitol in 2004, is part of the Smithsonian Institution.

With multiple museums and the National Zoo, the Smithsonian is the largest museum complex in the world. The NMAI is home to one of the largest and most diverse collections of native art and historical and cultural objects from across the Western Hemisphere.

## Reviewing the Section

1. Define in sentence form: immunity, tribe, treaty.
2. Why were written accounts about Native Americans of the early historic period so often inaccurate?
3. Name the seven Native American tribes that existed in Louisiana at the time of European settlement. Which ones ceased to exist by 1730?



Review Puzzle

**Top Left:** Traditional Coushatta basketry. **Top Right:** The National Museum of the American Indian.



# Chapter Review



Self Check Quiz

## Chapter Summary

### Section 1: Prehistoric Cultures

- The first people to live in today's Louisiana did not leave written records. Archaeologists use artifacts (pieces of evidence prehistoric people left behind) to understand how these people lived. Artifacts might include tools and weapons.
- The first people to live in Louisiana arrived during the Paleo Era. According to one theory, these people crossed from Asia to North America using a then-existing land bridge. The Paleo people were nomadic hunters who followed migrating animal herds.
- In the Meso Era, beginning around 7500 BC, people began hunting smaller animals like deer and rabbits. Men hunted, often using an atlatl, while women gathered seeds, roots, nuts, grains, and fruit. They built sturdier shelters and migrated less frequently.
- The Early Neo people left behind artifacts that include pottery, jewelry, and figurines. They developed the bow and arrow and established villages, where they stayed as long as food was abundant.
- In the Late Neo Era, beginning around AD 800, agriculture replaced gathering. The people established permanent settlements and continued the mound building of an earlier era. Temples were constructed on some mounds.

### Section 2: Historic Native American Tribes

- Native Americans handed down important truths through an oral tradition of storytelling. When Europeans arrived, they began making written records about the native people they encountered.
- Hernando de Soto and his men explored the southern region of the modern United States including today's Louisiana. Native Americans contracted diseases unintentionally spread by the Europeans. Influenza and smallpox had a devastating effect on Native Americans, who had no immunity to these diseases.
- A tribe is a group of native people who share a name, common ancestry, language, and way of living. Tribes spoke many different languages, but most could communicate in Mobilian, a common trading language.
- The Atakapa ("eaters of flesh" in the Choctaw language) lived in the southwest corner of modern Louisiana. They ate the body parts of the enemy killed in battle, believing they could absorb that person's power.
- The primary village of the Natchez people was called Grand Village. The Natchez had a highly developed class structure with a king at the top of society, nobles in the middle, and stinkards at the bottom. Many Natchez were killed or captured in a land dispute with French settlers.
- The Caddo were traders and skilled horsemen who had settled along the Red River and its tributaries by the time the Europeans arrived. Eventually, the Caddo sold their land in Louisiana to the U.S. government for \$80,000 in cash and trade goods, finally settling on a reservation in Oklahoma.
- The Chitimacha lived in 15 villages spread across southern Louisiana. A male chief ruled the Chitimacha. After a lengthy conflict with the French and their Native American allies, the Chitimacha settled near Grand Lake in today's St. Mary Parish.
- When the Europeans arrived, the Choctaw was the second-largest tribe in what is today the southeastern United States. Conflicts with Europeans and their longtime enemies, the Chickasaw, weakened the tribe. The Jena Choctaw, Clifton Choctaw, and Ebarb-Choctaw-Apache tribes still live in Louisiana.
- The Houma lived in southern Louisiana, relocating several times after the arrival of the French but eventually settling in Terrebonne and Lafourche Parishes. In the wetlands, they learned to hunt, fish, and trap local animals. The name of Louisiana's capital city, Baton Rouge, commemorates the Houma's early totem (a tall "red stick").
- The Tunica settled in Louisiana after being driven out of Mississippi by the Chickasaw. The Biloxi were forced inland when the French settled on the Gulf Coast near their villages. By the 1780s, both tribes had settled in Avoyelles Parish. The Tunica were governed by two chiefs. A peace chief led tribal affairs, and a war chief was their military leader. The Tunica were skilled and successful traders.
- The Coushatta migrated to Louisiana in the early 1800s. They eventually settled in south-central Louisiana in Allen Parish. One of the Coushatta tribe's cultural achievements is the weaving of intricate baskets from long-leaf pine needles.



## Activities for Learning

### Understanding the Facts



1. Which term refers to human-made objects, especially ancient tools and weapons, often buried deep in the ground?
2. According to scientists, how did the Paleo people cross into North America?
3. What types of animals did the Paleo people hunt?
4. Describe the atlatl.
5. What materials were used to construct the bow and arrow of the Early Neo Era?
6. What crops were grown by the Late Neo people?
7. Which two diseases killed nearly half of the Native American population?
8. What is the meaning of the tribal name Atakapa?
9. Where was the primary village of the Natchez located?
10. What item did the Caddo trade in exchange for horses?
11. What was the population of the Chitimacha at its height?
12. Who were the long-time enemies of the Choctaw?
13. In which modern-day parishes did the Houma tribe eventually settle?
14. Explain how the Tunica were governed.
15. Why did the Coushatta move to Louisiana?



Spanish moss is a flowering plant that grows upon larger trees, commonly the southern live oak or bald cypress.

### Developing Critical Thinking



1. How are archaeologists able to reconstruct the practices of prehistoric cultures?
2. Why was Grand Village an advantageous location?

### Writing across the Curriculum



Imagine you are the announcer at a Choctaw stickball game as illustrated on page 136 and as described at this website: [www.choctaw.org/culture/stickball.html](http://www.choctaw.org/culture/stickball.html). Write a play-by-play description of the contest.

### Exploring Louisiana on the Internet



Go to [www.crt.state.la.us/dataprojects/archaeology/moundsguide/downloads/DOA-Moundbook-200\\_final.pdf](http://www.crt.state.la.us/dataprojects/archaeology/moundsguide/downloads/DOA-Moundbook-200_final.pdf). Select any three Indian mounds described there. Compare and contrast these mounds in regards to height, base dimensions, shape, number of mounds, and date of construction.

### Building 21st-Century Skills: Understanding Timelines



A timeline is a graphic representation of important events during a particular historical period. Creating a timeline is an effective way to organize and remember historical events. Placing events on a line suggests that there is a past, present, and future. Sequencing events chronologically (time order) helps us see change over time as well as the connections between two or more events. A timeline of events also serves as a reference point for other developments that occurred during the same historical period.

Look at the timeline on page 137. It covers a period of 32,000 years. Each event is placed at the year it happened. Select any two events on the timeline that are nearest to each other. Describe the historical connection(s) between the two. If you could add one more event and year from Chapter 5 to the timeline, what would it be? What event is chronologically nearest your added event? Why do thousands of years separate events in the BC period, but events in the AD period appear in much shorter intervals?