

## Plains

- From Canada to central Texas and from the Rocky Mountains to the Mississippi River; all changes of season with heavy to moderate precipitation
- Hunting buffalo and small game along with plant gathering on southern Plains  
Also seminomadic agriculture among some groups on northern Plains: farming corn, beans, squash, and sunflowers part of the year and hunting part of the year
- Tipi: cone-shaped structure made of poles and covered with buffalo hides
- Clothing made of animal skins, moccasins
- Vision quest in which a young man or woman fasted alone away from the village in the hope of dreaming of a spirit who would guard him or her for life
- Blackfeet  
Dyed their moccasins black, hence the name  
Relied on the buffalo for their way of life  
Many deaths from smallpox, lack of food when buffalo died out, actions of whites  
Today, some 10,000 live as farmers and ranchers on reservations
- Crow  
Allied with white soldiers in Plains Indian Wars of 1800s (frequently fought the Sioux)  
Scouts for General Custer at the Battle of Little Bighorn  
Today, around 5,000 on a reservation in Montana
- Sioux: three branches known as Dakota (Santee Sioux), Lakota (Teton Sioux), and Nakota (Yankton Sioux)  
Allies of the British in the American Revolution and War of 1812  
Fought as allies of Cheyenne at Little Bighorn  
Massacre of Sioux at Wounded Knee in 1890, end of Native American resistance  
Treaty giving Sioux the Black Hills ignored when gold found  
56-year court case (1923–1979) awards Sioux \$105 million for Black Hills
- Cheyenne  
Once friendly toward whites  
Fought white encroachment on lands and massacre of Cheyenne at Sand Creek  
With Sioux, massacred General Custer and his soldiers at Little Bighorn  
Today, more than 7,000 on reservations

- Arapaho

Fought white encroachment and joined with Cheyenne to avenge Sand Creek

Today, some 5,000 on reservations as farmers



## Plains Native Americans and Extermination of the Buffalo

The coming of the railroad and the influx of Easterners and European immigrants onto the Plains in the latter half of the 1800s changed the way of life of Plains Native Americans forever. Up until the 1860s, the northern and southern Plains had few European-American settlers. But the Homestead Act of 1862 encouraged settlement by giving 160 acres of land to any citizen or immigrant willing to live on and cultivate the land for five years and pay a modest processing fee. That land was home to Plains Native Americans, whose way of life depended on hunting buffalo.

Before the arrival of the white settlers, buffalo were plentiful on the Great Plains. Native Americans killed buffalo, but not in such numbers that the animals were endangered. The Native Americans generally used every part of the animal. They ate the meat for food and turned the skins into teepees, clothing, and storage vessels. Bones were used as utensils and tools. Muscle and sinew were used for sewing pieces of hide together. When the European-American settlers arrived, Native American hunters provided them with buffalo hides in exchange for manufactured goods. Later, European-American hunters killed buffalo themselves to feed the construction crews that built the transcontinental railroads across the plains and to supply hides to tanneries to be made into leather goods. Much of the killing was done between 1870 and 1883, and by 1890 less than a thousand buffalo remained. Some hunters also killed for sport, shooting buffalo from trains. Some scholars estimate that as many as 15 million buffalo were killed during the 1800s. By the turn of the twentieth century, the buffalo were gone in many places and the animal had become an endangered species. It is thought that there were only 34 buffalo left on the northern Plains. The combination of the land-taking and the extinction of the buffalo brought major changes to the lives of the Native Americans.