

Adapting to their stable environment, the Iroquoian Indians became superb farmers and developed early systems of democratic government. They lived in "longhouses," large dwellings that housed extended families. Constructed of poles and slabs of bark, a typical longhouse was 10 m wide, 10 m high and 25 m long.

### *Plains Indians*

The Plains Indians occupied a vast territory of grasslands, or prairies (parts of Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta), that was once home to thriving herds of antelope and buffalo. These tribes — the Blackfoot, Blood, Piegan, Gros Ventre, Plains Cree, Assiniboine, Sioux and Sarcee — were greatly dependent on the buffalo for food and clothing. Thus, they lived a nomadic lifestyle, following the buffalo herds on their migrations across the prairies.

Plains Indians lived in "tipis," slightly tilted, cone-shaped dwellings constructed of poles covered with buffalo hides. Before the introduction of the horse to North America, dogs were used to pull the disassembled homes and possessions of Plains Indians from one temporary living site to another. The arrival of horses (about 1730) made travel faster and easier for these tribes, and they quickly became skilled riders.

### *Plateau Indians*

The Plateau Indians occupied what is now the British Columbia interior — a territory that ranges from semi-desert conditions in the south to high mountains and dense forest in the north. There were six principal tribes: the Interior Salish, Lillooet, Thompson, Shuswap, Okanagan and Lake Indians.

Although they lived in vastly different environments, these tribes had in common a strong dependence on salmon as a year-round source of food. Wild roots and berries also formed an important part of their diet. These tribes are known for their distinctive homes, which ranged from subterranean dwellings to buffalo hide tipis and lean-tos made of poles and spruce bark.

### *Pacific Coast Indians*

The Pacific Coast culture area had a mild climate and heavy rainfall, which produced dense forests of gigantic firs, pines and red cedars. The principal tribal groups were the Tsimshian, Gitksan, Skeena, Haida, Nootka and Coast Salish. In addition to living on the mainland, Pacific Coast tribes occupied the Queen Charlotte Islands and Vancouver Island.