

# The New World



## A Common DNA

Where did the **Native Americans** come from? Scientists agree that the ancestors of the indigenous peoples of the Americas probably migrated from Eurasia across **Beringia**, a land bridge connecting the two continents, between 9,000 and 50,000 years ago.

This theory is based on research conducted on the DNA from a 10,000-year-old fossilised Alaskan tooth, and its link to the indigenous tribes of Tierra del Fuego, Ecuador, Mexico, and California.

## Historical Mistake

These early **Paleoamericans** then started to spread across the Americas, diversifying into hundreds of distinct tribes. Before the arrival of Europeans, the total population of the Americas varied between 10 and 112 million.

Some natives were hunters, while others were food-gatherers, and many practised fishing and agriculture.

**Crazy Horse:** "All we wanted was peace and to be let alone. Soldiers came (...) in the winter and destroyed our villages. Then Long Hair (Custer) came. (...) They said we massacred him, but he would have done the same to us."

**Anonymous:** "The White Man made us a lot of promises but he kept only one: he said he would take our land and he did."

## We Eat Their Food

The Native Indians cultivated many different plant species. Those species now constitute 50-60% of all worldwide cultivation! Corn, pumpkins, zucchini, tomatoes, potatoes, beans, strawberries, pineapples, peppers, peanuts, and even cocoa beans, were first cultivated by the Native Indians.

## The Clash with Europe

In the sixteenth century, Europeans brought horses to the Americas. Some of these animals escaped and began to reproduce in the wilderness. The introduction of the horse had a deep impact on the culture of the Natives living in the Great Plains because horses made it possible for some tribes to travel and greatly expand their territories.

However European colonization forever changed the lives and cultures of these peoples. Natives were not immune to European diseases and war and epidemics soon killed thousands of them. Today, in the USA, only a tiny minority of Native Americans survive in Reservations.



## 1 Now answer these questions.

- 1 Where did Native Americans originally come from?
- 2 What was 'Beringia'?
- 3 What do tribes in Tierra del Fuego, Ecuador, Mexico, and California have in common?
- 4 What did the Paleoamericans do when they reached the Americas?
- 5 How did the Native Indians get food?
- 6 Were vegetables and plants the same in Europe and in the Americas before the 16th century? Why? Explain.
- 7 Who brought horses to the New World and what was the natives' reaction to this?
- 8 Why and how did European civilization change the culture of the American peoples?