

LESSON ONE: An Overview of Native Americans in Kansas

Time 30 minutes

Trunk Resources

Tribal Comparison game cards.

Maps

#1 Indian reservations in Kansas from 1846-1900. #2 Indian tribes in Kansas from 1540-1854.

Worksheet

#1 Tribal comparison chart

Teacher Preparation

Photocopy worksheet #1 for each student.

Objectives

1. Students will recognize that there are different Native American tribes with different traditions.

Historical background

Cultural Periods

According to archeological evidence, Kansas has been inhabited continually for about the last eleven thousand years. This time span can be divided into cultural periods.

Paleoindian period. 9000B.C. until 7000 B.C.

Paleoindians were big-game hunters. They lived in small bands and killed mammoths and large bison with stone-pointed spears. The hunters used all parts of the animal. Paleoindians hunted small animals and gathered some plants for food. Some may have used dogs for transportation.

Archaic period. 7000 B.C. until A.D. 1.

Archaic groups hunted bison, deer, elk, and smaller game. They gathered fruit, roots, seeds, and possibly some grains. Their tools included stone-pointed weapons, axes, chisels, and grinding slabs. Archeologists have found burned remains of hickory nuts, walnuts, and other edible plants at Archaic sites in Kansas.

Early Ceramic periods. A.D. 1 until A.D. 1000.

The two culture groups of the period, Middle Woodland and Plains Woodland, were apparently influenced by cultures from the Eastern Woodlands. The Woodlands people hunted bison, deer, turkeys, beavers, raccoons, rabbits, and turtles. They gathered fruits, roots, seeds, and grains. The Woodlands people were the first to use pottery, and their tools were more complex than those of earlier cultures.

Middle Ceramic period. A.D. 1000 until A.D. 1500.

The Plains farmers raised corn, beans, and squash. Storage pits and bone hoes were common at this time. Indians became more skilled at making pottery, tools, and weapons. Trading contacts with other Indian groups also increased. In what is now northern Kansas, the Plains farmers lived in earth lodges, and in the southern part of the state they lived in grass lodges.

Late Ceramic period. A.D. 1500 until A.D. 1800.

This era is also known as the Protohistoric period. In eastern Kansas, the Indians lived in earth or grass lodges. They hunted, gathered fruit, seeds, and roots, and raised corn and other crops. Groups in western Kansas lived in skin tipis, gathered wild plants, and hunted bison.

Historic period. 1800 to 1870.

Historians use the Spanish explorer Coronado's visit in 1541 as the beginning of "historic" times in Kansas. Archeologists prefer 1800 to 1870. The Indian cultures during the Historic period were the "modern" Indian groups who used horses. As with the Protohistoric peoples, Historic Indians' lifestyles were different in the eastern and western parts of the state. Towards the end of this period, Kansas settlement increased and Indian tribes began to be removed.

Modern era. 1870 to present.

By the 1870s the majority of original Indian tribes had been moved, mostly to Indian Territory (Oklahoma). A small number of Indians remain in Kansas today. The four tribes that retain reservations are the Potawatomi, Iowa, Kickapoo, and Sac and Fox.

Early Native American tribes in Kansas

Many different tribes have lived in Kansas. It is impossible to learn about all parts of each tribe's culture. Some tribes have been studied by anthropologists; others are known through the observations of a few early visitors. Many tribes have passed on their cultural heritage from generation to generation.

Indian cultures, like all cultures, constantly change and adapt. Native Americans in Kansas were influenced by other native tribes, explorers, traders, missionaries, and emigrant tribes.

The native people who were seen by the Spanish explorer Coronado included the Wichita Indians. The Wichita Indians occupied the land at the confluence of the Big and Little Arkansas Rivers. They were "the People with Grass Lodges," a name given to them by the Osage tribe. The Osage word for this people is "Wia-chi-toh" or Wichita.

The Wichita Indians left their name in other places where they lived. Oklahoma has the Wichita Mountains and the Washita River. Texas has a town called Wichita Falls. The state of Arkansas has a river named the Ouachita.

The Kansa and Osage Indians lived in what is now eastern Kansas. They spoke similar languages, and most customs of these two tribes were very much alike. They lived in permanent villages and planted cornfields and gardens in the river valleys. They

lived similarly to their neighbors to the south, the Wichita. Sometimes the Kansas and the Osages went on seasonal hunting expeditions to the hunting lands to the west of their traditional homes.

The Kansas and the Osages were enemies of the Pawnees, who spoke a language similar to the Wichitas. The Pawnees mainly lived along the Platte River in Nebraska, but their hunting grounds extended as far south as the Smoky Hill River and as far east as the Blue River. Sometimes they built small villages on the banks of the lower Republican River or farther upstream in present-day Republic County. Because they roamed about hunting for buffalo, Indians of the High Plains are referred to as nomads. These tribes contrast with the more settled or sedentary tribes such as the Kansas or the Osage. The Cheyenne and Arapaho were nomadic tribes that hunted buffalo on the High Plains. They sometimes helped each other defend their common hunting grounds. The Cheyennes and Arapahoes villages were in protected valleys in the Rocky Mountains. They also spent part of the year in skin tipis, which they frequently moved to new locations in search of buffalo herds that roamed the Plains.

Later tribes to arrive in Kansas were the Comanche and Kiowa. After years of fighting each other, they became friendly and took control of the hunting grounds that would later become southwestern Kansas.

Emigrant Indians move to Kansas

Between 1825 and the early 1850s, over twenty-five tribes were forced to sign treaties agreeing to move to Kansas. More than ten thousand Indians were forced to move during this period. The move brought immense suffering to the Indian people, and many tribal members died during the journey west. The supplies and land that they received were often inadequate.

These emigrant Indians, as they were called, came from places such as Missouri, Illinois, Indiana, Ohio, Michigan, Wisconsin, Iowa, and Nebraska. They were from various tribes, such as the Shawnee, Delaware, Ottawa, Wyandot, Sac and Fox, Kickapoo, Potawatomi, Miami, and Quapaw.

Emigrant Indians faced many problems. Some had difficulty adapting to the Kansas environment. Fighting broke out among various emigrant tribes, and native Kansas tribes fought with emigrant tribes.

Missionaries from different religious faiths became involved with the emigrant Indians in Kansas. The missionaries hoped the Indians would adopt white ways and abandon their own. They felt they were moderately successful: the Baptists felt they succeeded with the Ottawa, and the Catholics with the Potawatomi. Many Indians did not agree with the missionaries' religious ideas. They did not want to send their children to mission schools because the subjects taught were contrary to Indian beliefs. The Indians preferred their own religions. For many tribes the association with missionaries was a negative experience.

Indians forced out of Kansas

Beginning in 1854, emigrant tribes were forced to give up their lands in Kansas. The Otoe and Missouri, Delaware, Iowa, Sac and Fox, and Kickapoo Indians were the first to sign treaties. White settlers, land speculators, railroad builders, and lumbermen wanted

the lands for themselves. By the 1870s almost all of the emigrant Indians had been removed along with two native tribes, the Kansa and the Osage. By 1881 only the Potawatomi, Iowa, Sac and Fox, and Kickapoo Indians had reservations in Kansas.

Indians in Kansas today

Kickapoos

The Kickapoo nation lived in Illinois when Europeans first arrived in North America. The Kickapoo Indians obtained food through both farming and hunting. By the late 1700s the U.S. government began pressuring the Kickapoos to move farther west. Many treaties were signed, and in 1832 the Kickapoos settled in what is now northeast Kansas. At that time the Kickapoos had 1.2 million acres of land; today they have only five thousand acres of their original land. The Dawes Allotment Act in 1880 gave individual Indians the right of ownership of land and later the right to sell that land. The government also gave their land to settlers. The tribe has fourteen hundred members today; about six hundred live on the reservation. The reservation is located in Brown County off Highways 75 and 159 near Horton.

Iowas

The Iowas came to Kansas in the early 1800s. They were primarily farmers who integrated well with their neighbors. Like the Kickapoos, they also lost land due to the Dawes Act and the U.S. government giving the land to settlers. The Iowas also gave some land to the Sac and Fox tribe. About twenty years ago the Iowa Indians began purchasing farmland to help them become more self-sufficient. The tribe now owns about two thousand acres in Kansas and Nebraska. The tribe has about two thousand members with about four hundred living on the reservation. The reservation is located in Brown County on Highway 159 near Hiawatha.

Potawatomis

The Prairie Band Potawatomi tribe has lived in Kansas since 1833. They came from Wisconsin by way of Indiana. In 1833, in what the tribes call the Trail of Death, they were forced to march to what is now Kansas. Because they were accustomed to the forests of the Great Lakes region, the Potawatomis had to adapt to the Kansas environment. Eventually they became successful farmers. As with other Kansas tribes, the Dawes Act led to the loss of much Potawatomi land. The Citizen Band of the Potawatomi tribe moved to Oklahoma to live on land the government offered them. The tribe has four thousand members today, with about four hundred living on the reservation. Their reservation is located about twenty miles north of Topeka on Highway 75 near Mayetta in Jackson County.

Sacs and Foxes

The Sac and Fox tribe originally lived in Illinois, fishing, trapping, and farming. As settlement spread farther west, the Sac and Fox tribe was forced to move to the Missouri River. Eventually the tribe was split into three groups when they were forced to move again. One group went to Oklahoma, another preferred to live in Iowa and Illinois, and the third wanted to stay on the Missouri River. This last group was eventually moved to Kansas. The Iowa tribe helped out and gave the Sac and Fox Indians some of their land.

They originally had a twenty five square mile reservation, but today only twenty five acres of the original land remains. The U.S. government ceded the land, or it was sold to non-Indians. Since then the Sac and Fox tribe has purchased three hundred and forty acres which is used for farming. The tribe has about three hundred members today. The reservation is in Brown County between Highways 159 and 7 near Reserve and White Cloud.

Sources: David Webb, *Indians in Kansas*; Robert Richmond, *Kansas: A Land of Contrasts*; Thomas Isern and Raymond Wilson, *Kansas Land*; *Kansas!* Magazine.

Vocabulary

Archaic Period – 7000 B.C. until A.D. 1

Bison – A large shaggy-maned animal with short horns. Commonly known as a buffalo.

Coronado – Francisco Vasquez de Coronado from Spain explored southwest America. In 1541 he marched north of the Texas Plains into what is now central Kansas.

Early Ceramic Period – A.D. 1 until A.D. 1000

Earthlodge – A home used by tribes such as the Pawnees, made from poles, and covered with earth and grass.

Grass lodge – A house for tribes such as the Wichitas, made from poles, and covered with grass and sticks.

Late Ceramic Period – A.D. 1500 to A.D. 1800

Middle Ceramic Period – A.D. 1000 to A.D. 1500

Nomadic – To move with purpose from place to place

Paleoindians – “Ancient Indians” or “the old ones.” They lived in what is now Kansas from approximately 9000 B.C. until 7000 B.C.

Sedentary – Settled or permanent throughout the year

Semisedentary – Settled or permanent during part of the year and nomadic otherwise

Thatch – A sheltering cover of a house made from materials such as grass or straw.

Tipi – A portable house made of tanned hides sewn together and stretched over a framework of poles.

Activities

1. Explain to the students that you will be discussing different Native American tribes that have lived in Kansas. Some of the groups lived in Kansas a long time ago, and some of the tribes live in Kansas today.
2. Give each student one Tribal Comparison game card. The cards are color coded to represent each tribe. Six tribes are represented with four cards for each tribe. The cards give information about shelter, time, food, and location in Kansas.
3. Tell the students to study their cards and then find their fellow tribal members. The easiest way to do this is by the color of the card, as each tribe is represented by a different color. All those with orange cards should find each other, all those with yellow cards should do the same, and so on. Each group should consist of four people.
4. Once all members of each tribal group have found each other, they should share the information on their cards.
5. Each group can then take turns telling the class the information about their tribe. They should be able to tell the name of their tribe, the type of housing their tribe used, when their tribe lived in Kansas, the type of food eaten, and their location in Kansas.

Wichitas

The Wichitas, a tribe of some three thousand, were a confederacy of several smaller groups of Caddoan-speaking Indians. The Wichita were the Indians that Coronado visited in 1541. From the 1500s to the 1700s, they lived along the Arkansas River in the area that is now northeastern Texas and southern Kansas. Although primarily farmers, they also hunted buffalo. The women raised corn, beans, melons, pumpkins, and squash. The men hunted buffalo. They lived in houses of thatched grass that covered pole frameworks (grass lodges).

Pawnees

From the 1500s to the 1800s the Pawnees were farmers and hunters who lived in a large area in what is now southern Nebraska and northern Kansas. Outside of the hunting season they lived in earth lodges. The Pawnee villages were protected by ditches and earth walls. Their crops included corn, beans, and squash.

Kiowas

The Kiowas lived in tipis and hunted buffalo. From the 1700s to the 1800s, they lived in what is now southwestern Kansas. They were excellent warriors and skilled horsemen. The Kiowas took over lands claimed by the Plains Apaches and the Wichita Indians.

Kansas (Kaw)

From the 1600s to the 1800s, the Kansas (Kaw) lived in villages along the Kansas River in what is now northeastern Kansas. They lived in either earth lodges or bark-covered lodges. The women grew corn, beans, and squash. During hunts the whole village used tipis as temporary homes. Belongings would be transported on a travois pulled by dogs. Later, travois were pulled by horse.

Arapahoes

The Arapahoes probably came from what is now southern Canada or Minnesota. During the 1800s, they were buffalo hunters who lived in a large area of the Plains including what is now northwestern Kansas. The Arapahoes were also fine horsemen and warriors.

Potawatomis

The Prairie Band Potawatomi tribe has lived in Kansas since 1833. Their reservation is located about twenty miles north of Topeka on Highway 75 near Mayetta in Jackson County. Today the tribe has four thousand enrolled members with four hundred living on the reservation.

6. To complete the activity students should fill out worksheet #1, the tribal comparison chart, included in the back of the teacher's manual.
7. Once the results have been compiled, students can compare them to map #1 (Indian reservations in Kansas from 1846-1900) and map #2 Indian tribes in Kansas from 1540-1854 provided in the trunk. Have the students look at the location of tribes on the maps and the dates they lived in Kansas.