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978-0-521-57393-1 - The Cambridge History of the Native Peoples of the Americas,  
Volume I: North America - Part 2

Edited by Bruce G. Trigger and Wilcomb E. Washburn

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THE CAMBRIDGE HISTORY  
OF THE NATIVE PEOPLES OF  
THE AMERICAS

VOLUME I:

*North America*

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VOLUME I: NORTH AMERICA

Edited by Bruce G. Trigger and Wilcomb E. Washburn

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**THE CAMBRIDGE HISTORY  
OF THE NATIVE PEOPLES OF  
THE AMERICAS**

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**VOLUME I  
NORTH AMERICA  
PART 2**

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*Edited by*

**Bruce G. Trigger**

*McGill University*

**Wilcomb E. Washburn**

*Smithsonian Institution*



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## EDITORIAL PREFACE

The North America volume of the *Cambridge History of the Native Peoples of the Americas* traces the history of the indigenous peoples living north of the Rio Grande from their earliest appearance in the New World into the 1990s. In the tradition of Cambridge histories, it seeks primarily to synthesize existing knowledge rather than to present the results of original research or to pioneer innovative approaches to the study of Native American history. Yet realizing this seemingly modest goal has been a formidable undertaking, lending credence to critics of the project who suggested that it might be premature and impossible to bring to completion. This volume draws upon the results of research by many generations of historians, anthropologists, archaeologists, physical anthropologists, linguists, and Native cultural specialists. Nevertheless, partly as a result of biases that only now are beginning to be understood, much about Native history remains poorly known among professional scholars. The co-editors were selected to represent some of the diversity within the multidisciplinary field of Native American history. One editor is an American historian, the other a Canadian anthropologist. Their political views are also quite different. By helping to ensure that a wide range of viewpoints receive serious attention, these divergences have been sources of strength rather than weakness in editing this work.

The present volume does not attempt to compete with the multivolume *Handbook of North American Indians*, or with many excellent monographs, in presenting a series of "tribal histories." Ethnic identities have shifted significantly over time in North America, as they have done in other parts of the world. Thus they do not provide a particularly useful framework for considering other important aspects of Native North American history, such as changing ecological adaptations, responses to European diseases and settlement, or the gradual development of a pan-Indian identity. In order to provide more flexible coverage, an approach has been adopted in

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which thematic concerns define some chapters, while regional coverage defines others.

Today no historical study can (or should) avoid self-reflection. Chapters 1 and 2 examine changing Native views of their history and the views of non-Native historians. These chapters put existing literature relating to Native American history into perspective and establish the nature, limitations, and biases of our current state of knowledge. This is followed by Chapters 3 to 5, which use mainly archaeological data to trace the history prior to European contact of hunter-gatherers (including the earliest inhabitants of North America), the development of agricultural societies in the East and the Southwest, and the emergence of stratified societies in the Mississippi Valley after A.D. 800. As the content of these chapters makes clear, this ordering does not constitute the imposition of a unilinear evolutionary scheme on this material; it merely reflects the historical order in which such societies initially appeared.

Chapter 6 surveys the nature of contact between Europeans and Native Americans in the sixteenth century, including the extent and impact of European diseases introduced at this period. This was a time when enduring European settlement was not yet established outside of Florida. Chapters 7 to 11 examine what happened to Native peoples from about 1600 to the 1880s in those parts of North America that were extensively settled by newcomers of European and African origin prior to the end of the nineteenth century. Two chapters are devoted to the Eastern Woodlands and one each to the Great Plains, the Southwest and California, and the Northwest Coast. Each chapter examines the role played by Native peoples in facilitating European settlement and the various strategies, ranging from alliance to prolonged conflict or avoidance, by which these groups sought to cope with and benefit from a European presence. These chapters also document how European demographic expansion and growing economic competitiveness made it ever more difficult for Native peoples to determine their own destinies. Chapter 12 explores the experience of the Native peoples living in all these regions from 1880 to 1960, a period when their common experience of Euro-American domination and reservation life, combined with improved communication, led Native leaders to forge a new collective identity as Indians that complemented and empowered their older ethnic identities.

Chapters 13 and 14 trace the history from earliest European contact until modern times of the Native peoples of the Northern Interior and Arctic regions of North America, including Greenland. These were areas

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where, until after 1945, Euro-American and Euro-Canadian settlement was minimal and where Native peoples preserved a considerable degree of political autonomy. A final chapter, by one of the co-editors, offers a personal evaluation of trends in Native North American life since 1960, a period that has seen Native people increasing in numbers and retaking ever more control of their political, economic, and cultural life. Despite continuing problems of poverty, unemployment, and dependency, especially in northern regions, these developments belie the once firmly held belief of Euro-Americans that Native people would either become physically extinct or disappear into the North American melting pot. Despite its optimism, this chapter clearly indicates the changing but persistent external pressures with which Native people still must contend.

While the topics to be covered in each chapter were decided by the co-editors, authors enjoyed complete freedom to interpret their material as they thought best. It was not easy to recruit authors for these chapters. Native American studies is a field characterized by intense specialization, with many scholars, both professional and amateur, focusing not merely on single peoples but on specific aspects of their cultures. It is not difficult to find specialists to write about Cherokee warfare, Hopi ritual, or seventeenth-century Huron history. But to find individuals able and willing to generalize on a regional or continental scale is far more difficult. The co-editors were fortunate to be able to assemble a team of young, middle-aged, and senior scholars, who could complete the demanding chores that were assigned them. Some undertook this work on short notice when prior authors were unable to write or finish their papers. Each chapter stretched the synthesizing abilities of its authors to a considerable degree. Despite generous page allowances, great concision, selection, and generalization were required in order to provide balanced coverage. While some thematic overlap between chapters was necessary, every effort has been made to eliminate simple duplication. The production schedule of collective works, as is too well known, is determined by the speed of the slowest contributor. The co-editors thank those authors who met their deadlines for patiently enduring the unconscionable delays caused by a few authors who were less prompt.

This book is written at a time when postmodern views encourage relativism and alternative histories. It is frequently maintained that every group, and indeed every individual, perceives the past differently and that there is no way to judge one version of the past to be more authentic than another. The co-editors recognize the value of alternative histories. Histo-

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ries written from a feminist or minority viewpoint complement mainline studies and ultimately make possible more rounded syntheses. In North America, ethnohistory played an important pioneering role in the development of the study of minority histories.

Nevertheless, the co-editors do not accept the extreme relativist argument that alternative views of history are incommensurate and that each must be accepted on its own terms. Historical interpretations can be judged not only according to their degree of internal logical coherence (this even most extreme relativists accept), but also according to their correspondence with factual evidence. Not all histories are equally consistent, nor do they stand up equally well when tested against the growing body of documentation that historians and anthropologists have at their disposal. Anyone or any group has the right to author histories, and many do so, consciously or unconsciously, in ways that promote their own interests. Yet professional historians have a responsibility to subject all interpretations to scholarly analysis. As more historical data become available, the possibility of subjective factors wholly determining interpretations diminishes.

This publication probably marks the end of an era in Native North American historical studies. Native American history and culture were studied first by amateur and then by professional anthropologists and historians, all but a few of whom were of European descent. Their work was grounded in evolutionary and romantic stereotypes. Native peoples were viewed as illustrating what earlier stages in the development of European culture had been like and as being on their way to cultural and probably biological extinction as a result of the spread of European civilization. Whether denigrated as cruel and uncivilized or portrayed as noble savages, Native peoples were treated as essentially belonging to the past.

Over the past forty years, researches by ethnohistorians mainly of European descent have revealed the mythical status of such views by documenting the important role that Native peoples have played, and continue to play, in North American society. The accumulation of a vast body of data relating to Native Americans both before and after the arrival of Europeans has provided a sound basis for a new understanding of Indian history. In particular, ethnohistorians have realized that indigenous societies are enduring and sometimes flourishing, and rarely disappear, even under the most adverse conditions. In this way, they have discovered for themselves what has long been obvious to Native peoples. These studies not only have revealed many more details about aboriginal history but also have trans-

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formed the understanding that nonaboriginal specialists and an increasing segment of nonaboriginal North Americans have of their own history.

This new attitude became especially evident during the commemoration of the quincentenary of Columbus's arrival in the New World. In 1992, the main emphasis was not on celebrating the achievements of Europeans, as it had been in 1892, but on coming to terms with the lasting suffering that European diseases and colonization had inflicted on the Native peoples of the western hemisphere. Encouraged by a new historical understanding, fewer Euro-Americans are associating living Native peoples with the past or viewing them as existing outside the social fabric and power structures of North America's national societies. In democratic societies, knowledge that helps to dispel unfounded prejudices held by majorities about minorities is of no small importance.

The co-editors are acutely aware that this history of Native Americans has been written by Euro-Americans and Euro-Canadians. This was not for the lack of a desire or effort to recruit Native American authors. Yet, despite a growing number of Native Americans who are writing about their past, the professional study of Native American history remains largely the domain of historians and anthropologists of European descent. While Native people have played the major political role in challenging the image that other North Americans have of them, nonaboriginal historians and anthropologists have been working to dispel myths that their predecessors helped to create.

It is essential that more Native people who are interested in studying their past should become professional historians and anthropologists, so that their special insights and perspectives can contribute to the study of Native history. Just as the barrier between Native and non-Native history was replaced by a symbiotic relation once Euro-American scholars realized that Native people had played a significant role in shaping North American society since 1492, so the distinction between professional anthropologists and historians on the one hand and Native people on the other should give way to disciplines in which Native people play an increasingly important role. Such collegiality will mark the beginning of a new phase in the study of Native history.

Especially in Canada there is a growing tendency to designate Native groups by the names they apply to themselves. Sometimes this amounts to little more than a spelling change, as when Micmacs are called Mi'kmaq. But it also involves calling Montagnais Innu, Hurons Wendat, Nootkas Nuu-chah-nulth, and the people Euro-Canadians call Ojibwas and Euro-

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Americans call Chippewas Anishinabe. Despite the merits of this practice and the respect that it implies for Native people, consistent use of such terminology at this time would prove confusing to an international readership that is familiar with the conventional names that Europeans have applied to these groups. Hence the co-editors have decided to retain the ethnic names and spellings utilized in the *Handbook of North American Indians*, while noting in brackets self-designations where groups who are now using these names first receive substantial mention. The usage we have adopted is little different from referring to España as Spain or Deutschland as Germany. Following Native preference and common usage, however, the modern Eskimos of Canada are regularly referred to as Inuit; those of Alaska as Eskimos. An analogous policy is applied to personal names: King Philip is preferred to Metacom and Sitting Bull to Ta-Tanka-I-Yotank.

In conformity with general usage, the term Iroquoian refers to any Indian group speaking an Iroquoian language, while Iroquois is restricted to members of the Five (later Six) Nations: Senecas, Cayugas, Onondagas, Oneidas, Mohawks, and Tuscaroras. Likewise, Algonquian refers to any group speaking an Algonquian language, while Algonquin applies specifically to a series of Algonquian-speaking bands living in and near the Ottawa Valley.

In response to complaints from historians, most notably James Axtell, that referring to collective members of indigenous groups in the singular is an ethnocentric and “nonsensical convention left over from the nineteenth century” (*The Invasion Within* [New York, 1985], xi), in this volume such groups are called Hopis, Hurons, and Utes, just as people normally speak of Germans, Italians, and Russians. Inuit is already a plural. The term prehistory is also eshewed on the grounds that it unduly segments the continuum of Native history and may falsely imply that Native peoples did not have true history prior to the arrival of Europeans. This does not mean, however, that authors do not recognize a significant difference between history based almost exclusively on archaeological evidence and that based on a mixture of texts and archaeological data or on textual evidence alone. The term tribe is also avoided except as it is used as an administrative term by the U.S. government. Finally, the co-editors have followed Francis Jennings in avoiding inherently racial expressions such as Whites, Red people, and Blacks, except as they appear in specific historical usage or as statistical categories. While it is impossible and probably counterproductive to try to keep abreast of all the latest fashions



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in politically correct terminology, these conventions seemed particularly important.

The co-editors wish especially to thank Frank Smith for his help in editing this volume. His contributions have gone well beyond commissioning and overseeing the production of this volume and warrant his being considered a third co-editor. They also thank Camilla Palmer, Production Editor, and David Anderson, copyeditor, for the care they have taken in guiding this manuscript through press. Trigger wishes to thank Professor Toby Morantz, McGill University, for her helpful advice at many stages in the editing of these papers.

Even a history of this size cannot cover every aspect of Native American history and in this respect it is bound to disappoint readers searching for particular facts. Nevertheless, it provides the first comprehensive history of the Native peoples of North America from earliest times to the present. It offers readers an opportunity to observe how Native peoples have dealt with the environmental diversity of North America and have responded to the different European colonial regimes and national governments that have established themselves in recent centuries. It also provides a chance to begin to compare how Native peoples have fared in Canada, the United States, and Greenland. It is hoped that it will long be a useful guide for readers around the world who are interested in the history of these peoples and will constitute a permanent record of the state of knowledge in this field in the mid-1990s, as well as a benchmark against which future progress can be measured.