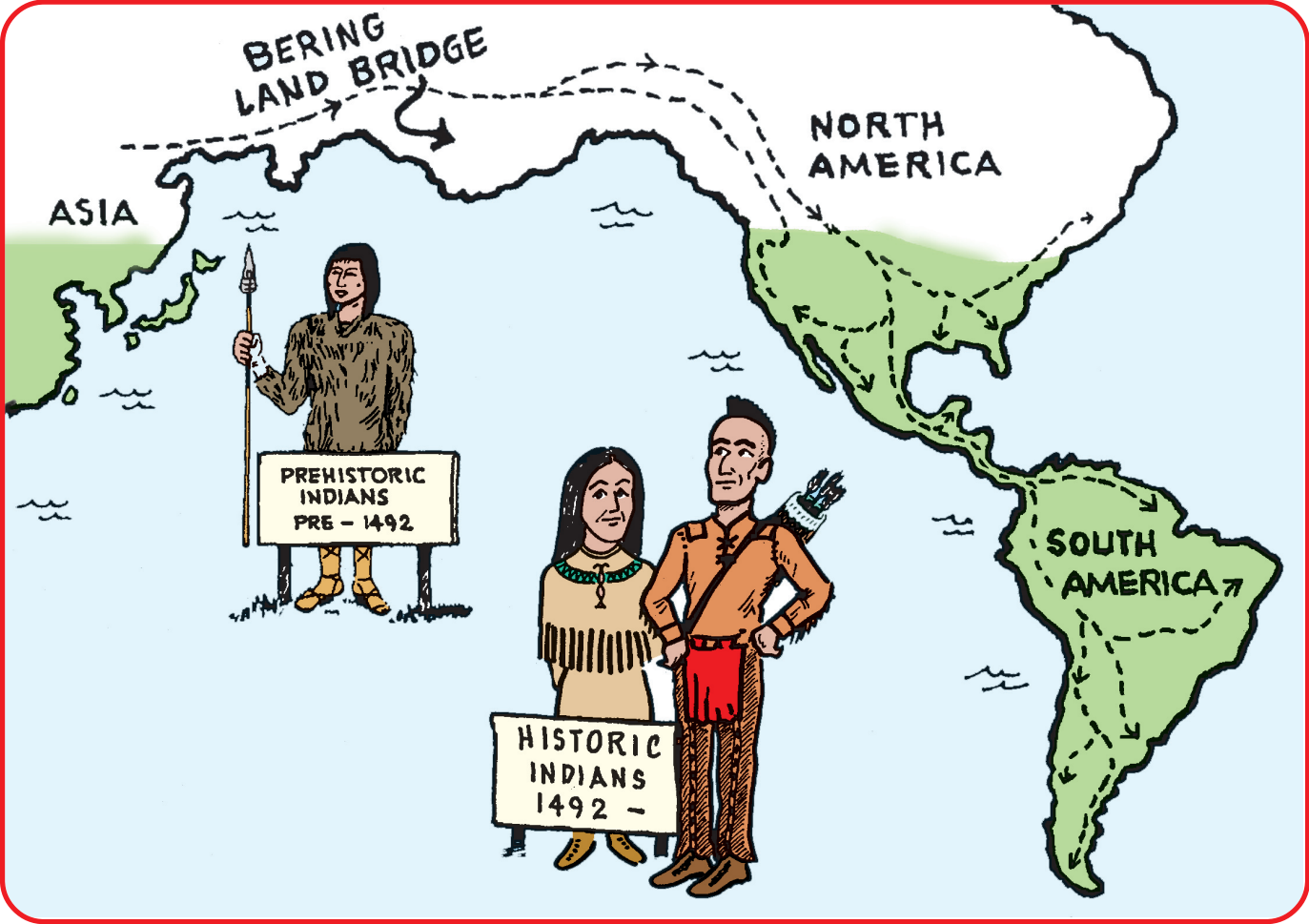


SECTION 2
NATIVE AMERICANS
20,000 B.C. - 1840s A.D.



In 1492, when Christopher Columbus discovered America, he called the New World inhabitants **Indians**, for he thought, mistakenly, that he had landed in India. The term **Indian** has remained in use ever since—more than 500 years. Today we use it interchangeably with the term **Native American** (although even these earliest Americans were immigrants, not natives). Nearly every Native American group, however, called itself by a name that meant people.



2-1 ★ THE FIRST AMERICANS: PREHISTORIC ADVENTURERS

prehistoric—refers to anything that happened before recorded history, which in America means before 1492 A.D.

immigrants—those who enter a new land, for the purpose of making it their permanent home

20,000 B.C.

1492 A.D.

Present

The last great ice age began about 75,000 years ago when the earth's climate cooled and glaciers (giant ice sheets formed from river and ocean waters) covered northern continents. Glacier formation lowered ocean levels and exposed a strip of land 1,000 miles wide between Asia and North America. For a long time this land, called the Bering land bridge, connected Asia and Alaska.

The Bering Land Bridge made possible one of the most important human migrations in history as people from Asia, hunter-gatherers, ventured into the uninhabited North American continent, beginning about 20,000 years ago. By 8,000 B.C. their descendants reached lower South America. These Asian immigrants, the first Americans, were ancestors of North and South American Indians.

The Ice Age ended 10,000 years ago. Melting ice sheets caused rising sea levels, and the Bering land bridge disappeared under water, closing the immigration route. From then until Columbus' discovery of America in 1492, America's first immigrants had the continent to themselves. Here are some of their prehistoric ADVENTURES.

ADVENTURE :

"THE EXPLORING OF NEW AND UNKNOWN WORLDS; A BOLD UNDERTAKING IN WHICH HAZARDS ARE TO BE MET, AND THE ISSUE HANGS UPON UNFORESEEN EVENTS."
WEBSTER



ADVENTURES IN AMERICA BEGAN PERHAPS 20,000 YEARS AGO DURING THE LAST ICE AGE, WHEN ANCESTORS OF THE AMERICAN INDIAN FIRST CROSSED THE LAND BRIDGE BETWEEN ASIA AND NORTH AMERICA.



THESE PREHISTORIC PEOPLE SPREAD SOUTHWARD, FOLLOWING HERDS OF WILD ANIMALS, WHICH THEY KILLED FOR FOOD.



★ THE FIRST AMERICANS: PREHISTORIC ADVENTURERS

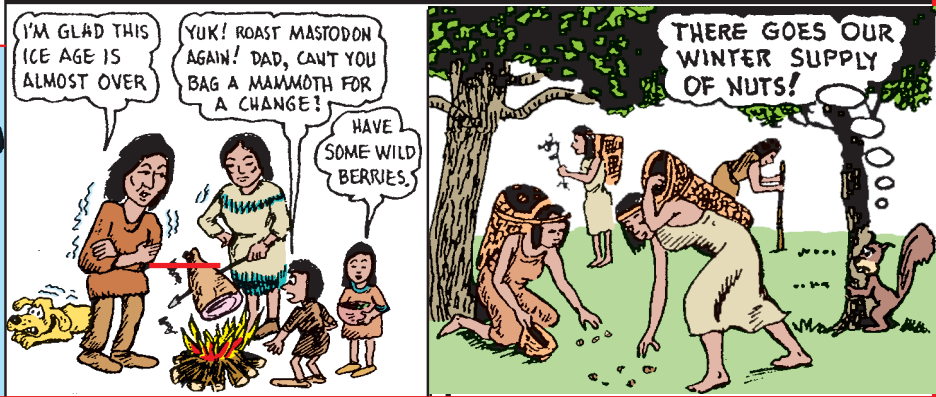
10,000 B.C.—Paleo-Indian

8,000 B.C.—Archaic

By 10,000 B.C. some prehistoric adventurers had migrated into what is now the United States of America.



Hunter-Gatherers—These early Americans lived a nomadic existence, hunting and gathering their food. Because they had to follow their food supply they could not settle down in one place, and they had to travel in small groups—usually in bands of about 30 people. The dog was their only tame animal.



500 B.C.—Woodland

700 A.D.—Mississippian

Farmers—The development of agriculture led to a new village-based life for some groups. By controlling their food supply, they could live in one place and support larger populations. Corn, beans, and squash were the major crops.



Shelter—Early Americans built homes from a variety of materials, depending on the geography and climate of their region. They used animal skins, wood, brush, dirt, clay, stone, straw, grass, and ice.



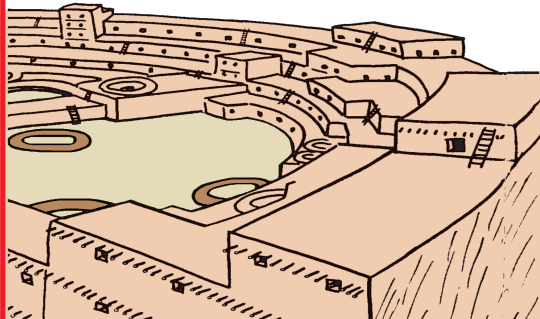
MOUND BUILDERS—SOME EASTERN TRIBES BUILT MOUNDS FOR BURYING THEIR DEAD. BY 700 A.D. THEY WERE BUILDING TEMPLES ON THEIR MOUNDS TO WORSHIP THE SUN



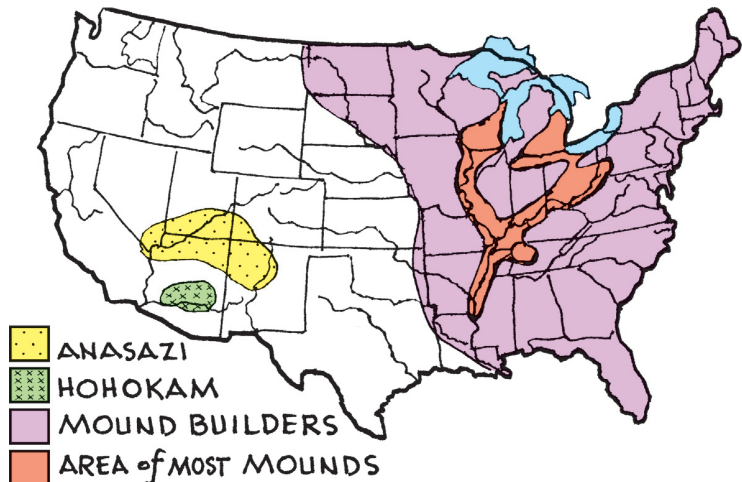
1492 A.D.

-- CITY FOLKS --

THE RUINS OF ONCE GRAND CITIES BUILT BY THE ANASAZI AND HOHOKAM STILL DOT THE SOUTHWEST. PUEBLO BONITO IN CHACO CANYON (1000s A.D. TO 1200s) HOUSED MORE THAN 1,000 PEOPLE IN 800 ROOMS.



PREHISTORIC CULTURES IN THE UNITED STATES



2-2 ★ NATIVE AMERICANS, 1500s-1800s

“My forefathers didn’t come over on the Mayflower, but they met the boat.”

—Will Rogers, descendant of the Cherokee Indians

1492

1835

Present

In 1492 when Columbus discovered the New World, he did not find a vacant land.

North and South America teemed with descendants of those early adventurers who crossed the Bering Straits—beginning about 20,000 years ago.

Population estimates of the two continents in 1492 range between 60,000,000 and 100,000,000.

In North America Indian groups spoke more than 300 different languages and had diverse cultures.

According to their environment, they made their living by hunting, fishing, farming, herding, or some combination of these activities.

Their social organization ranged from small tribes, composed of several clans (related families), to large confederacies, composed of many tribes.



2-3 ★ THE IROQUOIS CONFEDERACY: A MODEL DEMOCRATIC GOVERNMENT

“If England is ever to become a great nation, she must go to school to the Iroquois.

The Six Nations control this continent, not by accident, but through the triumph of their science of government.”

—Sir William Johnson, British High Commissioner to the Six Nations, 1765

1492

1570

Present



The European colonists who settled North America’s East Coast—beginning with Virginia in 1607, then Massachusetts in 1620—could not have survived without food and other help from friendly Indians who greeted them.

Perhaps an even greater contribution Indians made to the colonists was an introduction to democratic government. The Europeans had come from monarchical countries—such as England, France, Holland, and Sweden—where kings, queens, and nobles made the rules.

In America they encountered the powerful IROQUOIS CONFEDERACY: a representative democracy with elected rulers and shared governance between men and women. Organized in a federal union of sovereign nations, the Confederacy controlled much of present-day New England, New York, Pennsylvania, and parts of the South and Midwest.

The Iroquois Confederacy was formed more than 400 years ago and still exists today. In the 1700s its success in maintaining peace and union impressed colonial leaders, such as George Washington (who called the

Iroquois “Romans of the New World”), Benjamin Franklin, and John Rutledge. In 1787 democratic features of the Iroquois Confederacy’s representative government were noted by Rutledge and other framers of the U.S. Constitution.

According to Iroquois tradition, the Iroquois Confederacy was formed about 1570 by Deganawidaha, a Huron Indian inspired by a vision of peace, and Hiawatha, his Mohawk disciple. They united five* Iroquois tribes, or nations, under a constitution called THE GREAT LAW OF PEACE, which established a representative government based on the rights of the people.

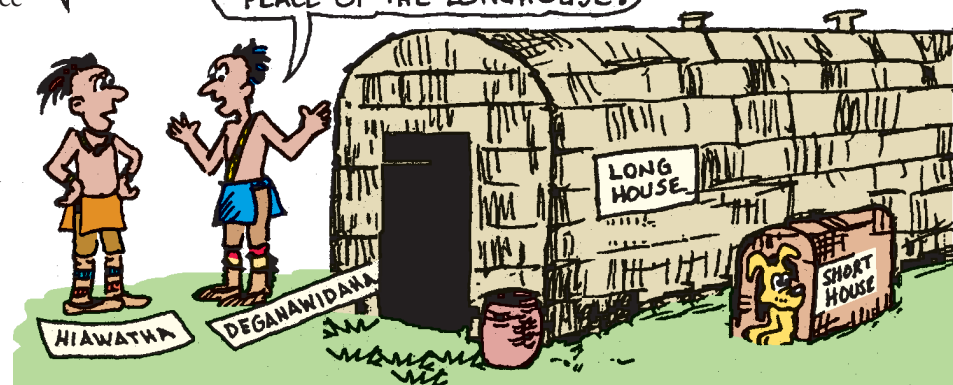
(*A sixth Iroquois nation, the Tuscarora, joined the Iroquois Confederacy in 1722.)

THE CONFEDERACY HAD TWO GOALS:

- 1) **INTERNAL PEACE** among the Five Nations by extending the peace of the longhouse—settling arguments peacefully at home through a family council
- 2) **EXTERNAL PEACE**—mutual defense against Iroquois enemies.

OUR “PEACE OF THE LONGHOUSE” CUSTOM—SETTLING ARGUMENTS THROUGH A FAMILY COUNCIL—KEEPS PEACE WITHIN OUR TRIBE. BUT WE HAVE TERRIBLE WARS WITH THE OTHER IROQUOIS TRIBES.

MY VISION IS TO END WARFARE AMONG THE FIVE IROQUOIS NATIONS BY UNITING THEM UNDER THE “PEACE OF THE LONGHOUSE.”



THE IROQUOIS CONFEDERACY CONSTITUTION,

called
THE GREAT LAW OF PEACE,

helped the Iroquois Indians achieve their goals of internal and external peace by settling disputes through democratic council meetings rather than warfare.

The Constitution, 117 sections long, was not in written form because the Iroquois Indians had no written language.

Instead, the Iroquois recorded their Constitution by stringing white and purple shell beads, called **wampum**, into belts. Pictorial designs in the belts symbolized parts of the Constitution.



WAMPUM BELT

WAMPUM MEMORY TECHNIQUE—Although unwritten, the Iroquois Constitution has survived 400 years. How? Each generation memorized it—all 117 sections—with the help of the pictorial wampum belts. (Today we know why this memory technique works so well. It is easier to remember something if you turn it into a picture. In a way, you are experiencing the wampum memory technique as you read this pictorial history book.)



Here's how the Iroquois Confederacy's democratic government worked: The Iroquois Nations chose 50 (male) chiefs to represent them annually in a Grand Council of Peace at Onondaga, the Iroquois capital in present-day New York.

The Grand Council of Peace was based on a separation and balance of powers. The chiefs sat in two decision-making groups—one on either side of a council fire—with a third group exercising veto power over both.

No question was decided until it had been discussed on both sides of the fire. All decisions had to be unanimous.



A chief appointed as **KEEPER OF THE WAMPUM** created wampum belt designs that recorded all decisions and treaties. He was expected to memorize these. (Each of the six Iroquois nations had a distinctive head piece, as shown above.)

Free expression was allowed in the Grand Council. Each Nation brought its own string of wampum belts, and these were all put in one big circle. When a chief wanted to speak, he picked up one of his Nation's belts. No one else would speak until he put it down.

One communication rule prevailed. Before stating his own view of an issue, a chief had to:

- 1) restate the issue being discussed—to make sure he understood it, and then
- 2) repeat the positions stated by previous speakers—to make sure he had understood them correctly.



★ THE IROQUOIS CONFEDERACY

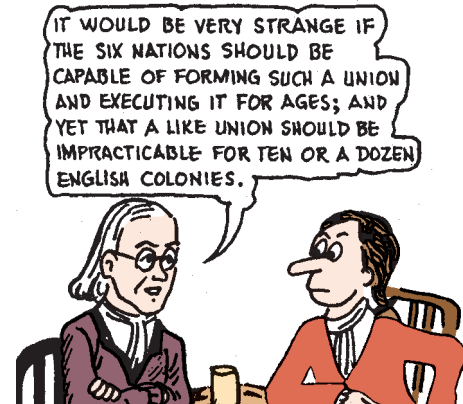
The eldest women of the Five Nations formed the Council of Women. They appointed the chiefs, advised them, and removed from office any who did not follow the will of the people.



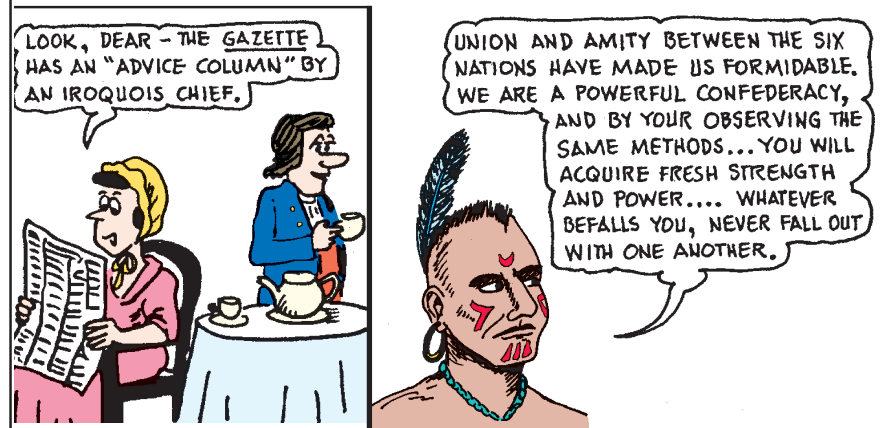
Surprised? Europeans were shocked. The Iroquois, like most Pueblo Indians, were a matrilineal society, meaning women were the heads of their households. When a man married, he moved into the home of his wife's family, where the eldest woman was in charge. Unlike Pueblo women, however, Iroquois women had political as well as domestic power. They were the most powerful women in North America.



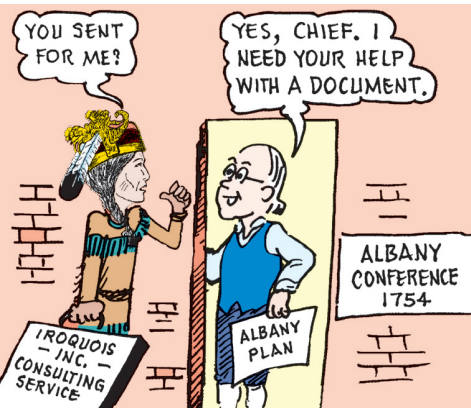
In the 1700s the Iroquois Confederacy's success in achieving peace and strength in union while preserving each nation's sovereignty impressed America's Founding Fathers, particularly Benjamin Franklin (Pennsylvania's Indian commissioner in the 1750s). He said:



In 1744 Benjamin Franklin published in his Philadelphia newspaper a speech by Iroquois Chief Canasatego to an Indian-British Assembly in Pennsylvania. Canasatego 1) complained of the difficulty in dealing with 13 separate colonies, and 2) advised the colonies to form a federal, democratic union like that of the Iroquois League.



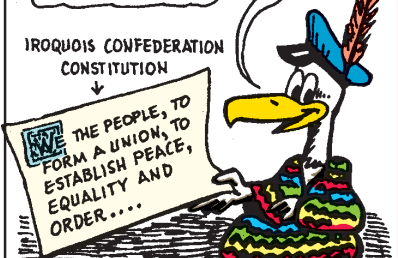
In 1754 Franklin reflected Iroquois influence in drafting the Albany Plan of Union, proposing that the 13 American colonies form a union promoting peace and strength, with a 50-man legislature called the Grand Council.



In 1754 the Albany Plan was rejected by the colonies and England, but it paved the way for union under the 1781 Articles of Confederation and the 1787 U.S. Constitution, which you will read about later.



AT THE 1787 CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION JOHN RUTLEDGE READ ALOUD AND COMMENDED THE PREAMBLE OF THE IROQUOIS CONFEDERACY CONSTITUTION. SOUND FAMILIAR?



The United States Constitution begins: "We the people of the United States, in order to form a more perfect union, establish justice, ensure domestic tranquility, provide for the common defense..."

2-4 ★ NATIVE AMERICAN LAND CESSIONS: AN OVERVIEW

cede—to yield or transfer to another, as by treaty; to surrender, as through force

1492

1607

1890

Present



You will be reading more of Native Americans later. To give perspective, here is an overview of what happened to the land they once inhabited.

United States history is marked by steady territorial expansion westward—by British-American colonists from 1607 to 1776 and by United States citizens after 1776. Expansion came at a great cost to Native Americans, for they were dispossessed of their land. How? Mainly through 1) purchase 2) treaties (inevitably broken by the white negotiators) or 3) force.

At first Native Americans were puzzled when colonists, such as Pennsylvania's founder William Penn, offered to buy their land, for they did not consider land private property. They viewed the land beneath them as the air about them: available to all and impossible to buy. But puzzlement turned to anger as they lost more and more land. They retaliated with periodic warfare against white settlers, beginning as early as 1622 in Virginia.

In 1810 Shawnee Chief Tecumseh spoke the following words—but to no avail. “The only way to stop this evil, is for the red men to unite in claiming a common and equal right in the land, as it was at first, and should be now—for it was never divided, but belongs to all. No tribe has the right to sell, even to each other, much less to strangers. Sell a country! Why not sell the air, the great sea, as well as the earth? Did not the Great Spirit make them all for the use of his children?”

