

Traditional Ecological Knowledge

20,00 B.C. – 1400s

Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) was acquired by indigenous peoples over hundreds or thousands of years through direct contact with the environment. This knowledge was developed and passed on from the time of earliest human habitation on this continent. Traditional knowledge guided interactions with the natural world and can still inform and inspire our scientific knowledge today.

Prelude:

PRELUDE: During periods of low sea level, the earliest people migrate from Asia across the Bering land bridge to North America. They probably come in three major waves, the first generally thought to be anywhere from 20,000-13,000 years ago. [Learn more.](#)

10,000 BC-9000 BC:

CLOVIS CULTURE: People of the Clovis Culture successfully spread throughout much of the Americas. They are known to have hunted the large mammals that existed at that time. Their large, fluted, chipped spear points, dubbed "Clovis points," have been found in association with mammoth remains. Mass extinction of the mega fauna was more likely due to climate change than to hunting.

9000 BC-8000 BC:

FOLSOM CULTURE: People of the Folsom Culture produce a smaller, thinner projectile point, likely in response to the absence of larger animals. Folsom people are believed to start using hooked atlatls. They hunt bison in large numbers.

3800 BC:

Earliest evidence of fish weirs (a construction of poles intertwined with branches placed in water to funnel fish). V-shaped stonework is placed from bank to bank (perpendicular to water's flow) and a small opening would be left in the base of the "V" where the weir would be placed. Remains of similar stoneworks are still evident in the Potomac River.

3000 BC - 2000 BC

The earliest Inuit and Aleut people arrive from Asia and hunt aquatic mammals, a lifestyle which remains today.

1000 BC:

WOODLAND ERA: Beginning of the Woodland Era of Native American culture. This era shows definite evidence of basic plant cultivation, extensive trade routes, artistic pottery, ornate burial grounds, and permanent settlements. Hunting continues with atlatls, darts, and spears.

0 AD:

TURKEYS DOMESTICATED: Evidence of domestication of wild turkeys in Mexico and what is now the southwest United States. Feathers are used for clothing and blankets, bones for sewing and tools, and turkey spurs for arrowheads.

800 AD:

BOW & ARROWS: Bow and arrows are first used in the Mississippi Valley, making hunting more efficient.

900 AD - Historic Era (post-1492):

The Mississippian era of Indian culture. This period ushers in a greater dependence on agriculture, with increasing variety of crops. Life becomes more sedentary and complexity of art increases in most areas. Explorers note some Native American groups kept domesticated deer for food.

Late 1400s:

EUROPEANS ARRIVE: Contact is made with the first Europeans to arrive. Explorers note that some Native American groups actually kept domesticated deer for food.