



## The Truth About Pre-Columbian Native Americans

1. Native Americans constructed sophisticated homes and buildings, from wegiwa homes in the middle-western part of the United States to pyramids in Mexico and Central and South America. All were incredibly sophisticated in design and construction often times accommodating winter cold and summer heat, complete with fire pit arrangements and sun holes to shift with the movement of the sun.
2. Native Americans mapped and named the star systems and used them to scientifically plot travels on the land and on the sea. As part of their education youth in many native nations were also taught to memorize tree types as well as other flora and fauna to understand seasonal change and shifts in what we would now call latitude and longitude.
3. Many Native Nations used sophisticated dams, dikes, and in some cases created and used early forms of piping to irrigate fields. They also used natural growth plants and other natural boundaries to move herds of animals they were hunting into boxed canyons and other places that made hunting them easier and more efficient.
4. While many North American Native Nations had a strong oral tradition rather than a written language, it is believed that the Aztec and Maya nations of present day Mexico and Central America had a written language and close to if not a 100% rate of literacy.
5. In almost all Native Nations, especially those that depended upon the oral tradition for the elder member of the nation were held in high esteem and treated with the utmost respect. It was the elder members who remembered the stories, historical, fictitious, and religious that were the cornerstones of the culture and life of the nation.
6. While native nations engaged in war and conflict and killed other natives, war was generally seen as a way for young warriors to prove they had skill rather than to destroy the enemy or take territory. In some native cultures there was a practice of “counting coup” though it was known by many other names as well. “Counting coup” was the ability to get close enough to your enemy without killing them, but instead touching them or stealing something off their person.
7. When natives hunted whether they killed a badger, bear, or buffalo, they used every piece of it, from the meat, to the fat, to the sinews, to the bones, to the teeth. Nothing was wasted. Long before it became vogue to be conservation minded, natives never out used the amount of resources in an area, or caused a negative impact on the natural fruits in the surrounding environs. In short, natives never out ate, out built, the natural areas they lived in and used.
8. Within the tradition of many North American Native Nations, the oral tradition was used to educate and instruct the youth on the ways and traditions of their nation. These stories survive within the present oral tradition of many native nations to this day. Pictographs and art rendered on walls and animal hides were also used to educate and inform. In present day Mexico, it is believed that the Aztec and Maya people had a sophisticated writing system that was taught in schools. It is further believed that they had libraries filled with books detailing their history. These were all destroyed during the Spanish Conquest.

9. In North, Central, and South America there are surviving pictographs that indicate that native peoples completed surgeries on those who were suffering. In one pictograph found in present day Mexico seems to indicate that a brain surgery was performed without anesthetic.

10. There is a rich tradition throughout North, Central, and South American native nations to create graphic art on animal hides, walls, and orally through poetry and stories. These artists were often times the elders, the teachers, the storytellers who held in great esteem by the nation as a whole.

11. In archaeological digs across the Americas stones, rocks, and other precious stones have been found from great distances away. This is strong evidence that the native nations had sophisticated economic trading avenues and that they used them often.

**SOURCES** 500 Nations by Alvin M. Josephy Jr. ; The Patriot Chiefs by Alvin M. Josephy Jr.; Folktales of Native Americans by Dee Brown; Bury My Heart At Wounded Knee by Dee Brown; Give Me Liberty! by Eric Foner; Native American Testimony by Peter Nabokov; Red, White, and Black: The People's of Early North America by Gary B. Nash; The Broken Spears edited by Miguel Leon-Portilla; Through Indian Eyes edited by James J. Cassidy Jr.; The World of the American Indian edited by Jules B. Billard; Into the Unknown edited by Jonathan B. Tourtellot; Rethinking Columbus edited by Bill Bigelow; Mexican-American Heritage by Carlos Jimenez, and The Earth Shall Weep: A History of Native Americans by James Wilson.