

# Introduction to Indigenous America

## KEY UNDERSTANDINGS

- Indigenous societies were complex and diverse (ethically, linguistically, culturally, socially, geographically)
- Indigenous societies resisted European conquest, conversion, and colonization.

## KEY QUESTION

How do the people we are going to look at today and in this unit, see themselves and their world?

## What do origin stories tell us about perspective?

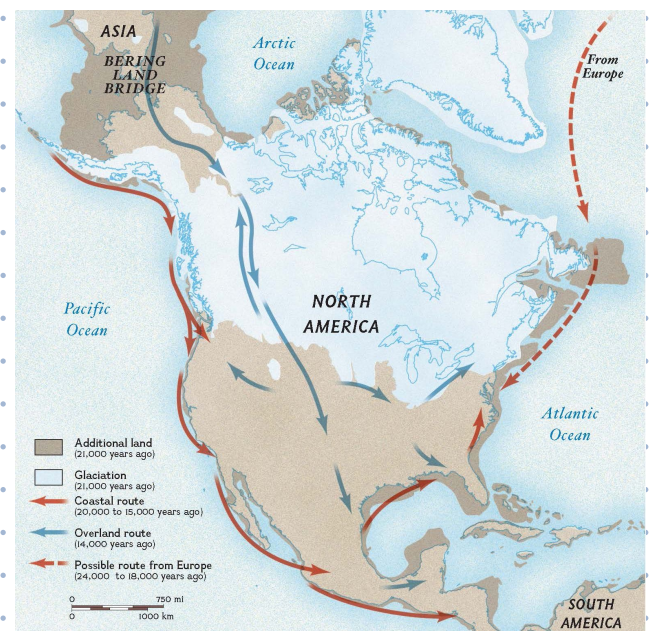
### I. What is an “origin story”?

- noun. 1. A backstory, or established background narrative, that informs the identity and motivations of heroes and villains in a comic book or similar fictional work
- 2. An account revealing how a character or group of people became a protagonist or antagonist, and it adds to the overall interest and complexity of a narrative, often giving reasons for their intentions.

### II. Historical perspective

- refers to both the worldviews of the historical actors we study as well as the worldviews we as students of history bring to analyzing the past. Understanding perspectives helps us better appreciate different points of view and how some stories become dominant historical narratives and others are erased.

- [For example] The Bering Land Bridge Theory and Western Perspective
  - Dominant historical and archaeological theories argue that North America was populated by a massive migration of people from Asia who walked across a Bering Land Bridge that connected Siberia (current day Russia) to Alaska.
- Turtle Island and Indigenous Perspective
  - Native narratives argue that the people of North America are not migrants, but *indigenous* of the land.
  - According to the Ojibwe origin story, a





great turtle sacrificed its life to support the weight of the earth. This story illustrates the great significance that land and the environment command for native people. This perspective often contradicts western perspectives of colonialism that emphasize conquest.

## How were indigenous societies complex and diverse?

- The role of geography
  - Geography played a key role in shaping the diversity of indigenous nations.
  - It explains why different societies were nomadic or settled
  - Land is central to the experience of indigeneity; native people are OF the land
  - How did geography shape native ways of existence and survival?
    - The Nations of the Plains
      - The Plains Indians (Sioux, Comanche, Wichita) lived on flat lands in and around the Dakotas, Wyoming, etc. not conducive to large-scale farming.
      - Engaged in hunting and led migratory lives
        - More migratory nations = more susceptible to settler conquest
    - The Nations of New York
      - The Iroquois Nation, in and around the Great Lakes, lived in areas conducive to farming, hunting, and gathering. Their longhouses ( a large communal village house) served as family and communal dwellings which represented the non-nomadic, settled way of life.
    - The Nations of Southern California
      - A temperate climate lent itself to hunting, gathering, and some agricultural practices.
      - Tribes included the Tongva, Chumash, Agua Caliente, and others.
      - LA is the home to thousands of other native people from the Pacific and Latin America.
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- Connection with Indigenous people and the Land Bridge
  - That indigenous people descend from people from the The Bering Land Bridge; it's important to acknowledge them as native people of the land b/c 1. That's what they prefer, so out of respect that is what we should acknowledge them as and 2. It acknowledges that they have rights to this land instead of people who are migrating or "passing through"; this stops the continuous thinking and actions of colonization.
- The first wave of the destruction of Native California was the Mission System:

- There were a total of 21 missions built, started by Junipero Serra, and they were built as an extension of Spain. It was an enslavement of California Natives where murder and sexual assault took place. The Spanish army displayed control and violence throughout the missions.
- The second wave of the destruction of Native California was the Gold Rush:
  - It came and changed lives at a rapid rate in a short amount of time. It caused environmental desecration and was the permitted driving force behind the mass genocide (80% of the Cali. Indian population lost) of the California Indians.
- The third wave of the destruction of Native California was forced assimilation and the boarding schools:
  - Many children were taken away from their homes and forced to go to boarding school to only be given a moderate education and taught “the white man’s religion”. This stripped them of success and caused them to be socially and emotionally isolated from their culture.

## How did indigenous people resist colonization?

- **God, Glory, Gold**
  - Spain was the first European power to begin wide-scale conquest and colonization of the Americas; Spanish conquistadors were motivated by:
    - God— The desire to spread Catholicism
    - Glory— The desire to build the power and prestige of the Spanish Empire through global conquest
    - Gold— The desire to extract mineral and natural wealth and other natural resources from the Americas for trade and wealth
  - EQ: “How do we justify things?” They justified their conquest through the Doctrine of Discovery
- **Resistance to Conquest and Conversion**
- **Indigenous people fought back in various ways:**
  - Maintaining cultural and spiritual practices, often hidden from Spanish conquistadores and missionaries
  - Migrating inland to escape European incursion
  - Outright warfare, such as the Pueblo Revolt of 1680
- **The Spanish subdued many native nations by the 18th century due to factors, such as:**
  - The decimation of Natives due to European diseases
  - European weaponry
  - Disunity and infighting between native nations



