

NATIVE AMERICANS

WORKSHEET PREVIEW

Native American Communities

Native American communities were organized by families. They were based on the links between people who were brothers and sisters, parents and children, or uncles and aunts, as well as the ties created by marriage.

Elders

Perhaps the most important people in any Native American community were the elders. These men and women were the teachers, and the people who held the knowledge and passed it along. Elders advised leaders so choices could be made that were the best for the whole community.

Decisions were made by consensus, or general agreement. Many Native American communities still use *talking circles* to make decisions. In a talking circle, everyone is equal and there is no leader or followers.

From the elders, the other adults and the children in the community learned about their history, culture, and traditions. The elders also taught the children about their responsibilities to the community. This especially included having respect for all of Creation and the gifts the Creator had given them.

Adults

Native American men and women shared the responsibility of feeding the community. The men fished, and hunted animals, especially larger animals such as moose and bears. The men traded with other Native American groups and built homes. When it was necessary, men also fought other Native American groups to protect their community or to expand it.

Men in Native American communities also cleared land and made it ready for planting. Native American women planted and harvested the crops. The women prepared the animals for eating, and dried and scraped the animal skins so they could be used to make clothing.

Women hunted small animals and birds, and also gathered berries, nuts, and other foods from the forests around them.

Children

Children were cared for by the entire Native American community. From an early age, children were taught skills that they would need as adults. For example, boys played games that taught them what they would need to know to fish and hunt successfully. Fathers, brothers, uncles, and grandfathers passed on their knowledge in this way. Girls learned how to cook food, prepare animal skins, and sew clothing. They were taught these important skills by their mothers, sisters, aunts, and grandmothers.

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"Native American Communities"—Think About It! (continued)

5. What is a *talking circle*, and how does it work?

6. Complete the chart to compare the responsibilities of Native American men and Native American women.

Responsibilities of Native American Men	Both	Responsibilities of Native American Women

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“Native American Communities”—Think About It!

1. a) Describe the organization of Native American communities.

b) Do you think this is a good way to organize communities? Give three reasons why or why not.

2. List at least three things that Native American elders do.

3. What skills did Native American girls learn?

4. What skills did Native American boys learn?

“Native American Communities”—Think About It! (continued)

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