NATIVE AMERICANS
A VISUAL EXPLORATION

by S.N. PALEJA

introduction by KEVIN LORING

the Big Picture
annick press
# table of contents

**Introduction**  
Page 4

**Origins**  
Where did the first Native Americans come from, and how did they get here?  
Page 6

**Tribes and Society**  
Where did they live, what kinds of shelters did they build, and what were their communities like?  
Page 12

**Plants and Animals**  
How did Native Americans obtain food and manage their resources?  
Page 20

**Culture**  
How many languages do Native Americans speak? What are some of their beliefs, and what do different tribes make?  
Page 26
When did the first explorers arrive, and what was the effect on Native populations?
have hundreds of other names, but it’s complicated to list them all. When we talk about Native Americans, we aren’t referring to a single group of people, but to a whole continent of distinct peoples, organized by tribe or nation, each with their own culture, identity, language, and history.

The author has gathered information from a variety of sources—not just research material, but stories, myths, and legends that have been passed down through generations of indigenous people. Sometimes experts or local tribes disagree about what they think might have happened because there is no written record from long ago, but new information and discoveries are always surfacing that help provide a better understanding.

Throughout their history, many indigenous tribes throughout North America used pictographs—drawings on rock or cave walls—to tell their stories. These amazing ancient records were coded with symbols that had great meaning. This book echoes that pictograph tradition by using dynamic and colorful visual cues to tell the story to a new generation.

The topic of Native Americans is immense, but this book begins the exploration of an exceptional people through the “Big Picture” of who they were and how they lived. I hope it will inspire you to explore more deeply the rich and fascinating world of Native Americans.

Kevin Loring is a member of the Nlaka’Pamux First Nation.
Where did they come from?

The Native Americans were the first people to live in the Americas—many thousands of years before European explorers and settlers arrived. How did they discover a new land?

Bridging Two Continents

Look at a map of the Americas today. It’s obvious the only way to get on or off the continent is by water or air. But thousands of years ago, humans were able to walk from Asia to North America over a “land bridge” connecting the continents. For this to happen, though, all the conditions had to be right.

Beringia

Often called a land bridge, Beringia was actually a huge mass of land connecting Asia’s eastern edge with what’s now Alaska. At its peak, it would have been 1,600km (1,000 miles) across.

Ice Age

The coldest point of the last ice age was about 20,000 years ago. Because so much water was locked up in ice, ocean levels were much lower than they are today, exposing more land.
The coldest point of the last ice age was about 20,000 years ago. Because so much water was locked up in ice, ocean levels were much lower than they are today, exposing more land.

20,000 years ago

Ice Age

today: 120 m (400 ft) deeper

How much of the Earth is covered in ice?

Frozen Planet

- 30% 20,000 years ago
- 10% Today

The Arctic is by far the shallowest of the world’s oceans, so when the climate cools and water levels drop, more land emerges.

Shallow Waters

The earliest migrants probably had no idea they had discovered a new continent. They were hunter-gatherers following their food sources as large animals moved east.

The Native Americans were the first people to live in the Americas—many thousands of years before European explorers and settlers arrived. How did they discover a new land?

All Native Americans are believed to be descended from the several thousand people who lived in Beringia.

Beringia

Arctic Ocean

Shoreline today

Siberia

Alaska

Bridging Two Continents

Look at a map of the Americas today. It’s obvious the only way to get on or off the continent is by water or air. But thousands of years ago, humans were able to walk from Asia to North America over a “land bridge” connecting the continents. For this to happen, though, all the conditions had to be right.

Beringia

Often called a land bridge, Beringia was actually a huge mass of land connecting Asia’s eastern edge with what’s now Alaska. At its peak, it would have been 1,600 km (1,000 miles) across.

During the ice age, Beringia was a mild, ice-free refuge, covered in plants and grass. Ice may have closed off passages to both Asia and North America, trapping people in Beringia for as long as 20,000 years—long enough to develop genetic differences from their Asian ancestors.

The earliest migrants probably had no idea they had discovered a new continent. They were hunter-gatherers following their food sources as large animals moved east.

There’s evidence humans first reached Siberia’s eastern edge about 40,000 years ago. The land bridge probably started to emerge around the same time.

All Native Americans are believed to be descended from the several thousand people who lived in Beringia.

Where did they come from?

Bridging Two Continents

Look at a map of the Americas today. It’s obvious the only way to get on or off the continent is by water or air. But thousands of years ago, humans were able to walk from Asia to North America over a “land bridge” connecting the continents. For this to happen, though, all the conditions had to be right.

Beringia

Often called a land bridge, Beringia was actually a huge mass of land connecting Asia’s eastern edge with what’s now Alaska. At its peak, it would have been 1,600 km (1,000 miles) across.

The Native Americans were the first people to live in the Americas—many thousands of years before European explorers and settlers arrived. How did they discover a new land?

All Native Americans are believed to be descended from the several thousand people who lived in Beringia.

Where did they come from?

Bridging Two Continents

Look at a map of the Americas today. It’s obvious the only way to get on or off the continent is by water or air. But thousands of years ago, humans were able to walk from Asia to North America over a “land bridge” connecting the continents. For this to happen, though, all the conditions had to be right.

Beringia

Often called a land bridge, Beringia was actually a huge mass of land connecting Asia’s eastern edge with what’s now Alaska. At its peak, it would have been 1,600 km (1,000 miles) across.

The Native Americans were the first people to live in the Americas—many thousands of years before European explorers and settlers arrived. How did they discover a new land?

All Native Americans are believed to be descended from the several thousand people who lived in Beringia.

Where did they come from?

Bridging Two Continents

Look at a map of the Americas today. It’s obvious the only way to get on or off the continent is by water or air. But thousands of years ago, humans were able to walk from Asia to North America over a “land bridge” connecting the continents. For this to happen, though, all the conditions had to be right.

Beringia

Often called a land bridge, Beringia was actually a huge mass of land connecting Asia’s eastern edge with what’s now Alaska. At its peak, it would have been 1,600 km (1,000 miles) across.

The Native Americans were the first people to live in the Americas—many thousands of years before European explorers and settlers arrived. How did they discover a new land?

All Native Americans are believed to be descended from the several thousand people who lived in Beringia.

Where did they come from?

Bridging Two Continents

Look at a map of the Americas today. It’s obvious the only way to get on or off the continent is by water or air. But thousands of years ago, humans were able to walk from Asia to North America over a “land bridge” connecting the continents. For this to happen, though, all the conditions had to be right.

Beringia

Often called a land bridge, Beringia was actually a huge mass of land connecting Asia’s eastern edge with what’s now Alaska. At its peak, it would have been 1,600 km (1,000 miles) across.

The Native Americans were the first people to live in the Americas—many thousands of years before European explorers and settlers arrived. How did they discover a new land?

All Native Americans are believed to be descended from the several thousand people who lived in Beringia.