The Native American: Culture And Columbian Exchange

About the Native American Culture

The culture of the Native American people in the United States are known for their wide range and organically diversified lifestyles, beliefs, mannerisms, art forms as well as regalia. The culture of the original inhabitants of North America typically is defined using the influence of the pre-Columbian area, which is a geographical location where there are shared cultural traits. The culture of the North western area, for instance shared common cultural traits like woodworking, salmon fishing, large towns or villages as well as a hierarchical socio-cultural structure.

Though there are wide differences in their language, cultural features, customs and manner of dressing, there are some elements that are frequently encountered and commonly shared by various tribes. Ancient scholars of European-American descent had actually described the North American socio-cultural society as being dominated by several clans.

The phenomenon known as the Columbian exchange

The eventual colonization by Europe of the Americans actually had heavily impacted on the culture of the Native Americans through a process that is called the Columbian exchange.

Technically, the Columbian exchange which is otherwise referred to as the Columbian interchange, generally means the broadly adopted transfer of animals, culture, plants, technology, human populations, ideas and philosophies between the old world and the Americas from the 15th to the 16th centuries immediately after the expedition of Christopher Columbus in 1492.

This Columbian exchange typically had destructively impacted the culture of the Native Americans by disease as well as cultural clash which had caused several values of the Europeans such as labour, values of the family and private property ownership to lead to crises, forceful stealing of ancestral lands as well as forced slavery.

But on the contrary, the influence which was brought about by the Columbian exchange actually was not only about the negative aspects only. For instance, with another introduction of horsing activities to the North American people, there was an easy transition in the lifestyle of the plain Indians in carrying out trades, business transactions, hunting activities and warfare techniques and strategies. Apart from these useful benefits, the Columbian exchange had also helped in improving the capability of the Native Americans in transporting their belongings as well as efficiently moves their domestic settlements from one point to another.

In the initial years when the Native American people met explorers and settlers from Europe that trade for a living, they had exchanged valuable items such as alcoholic beverages, firearms, crafts, horses, steel and iron, trinkets and blanket furs. This day, whereas the average Native American is still devoted to their ancestral traditions, the cultures of the native American keeps on evolving and continues to adapt to dynamic circumstances.

The influence of Native American sports

The leisure time of the Native American people often involves competitive team and individual sports. Billy Mills, Joe Hipp, Jacoby Ellsbury, Jim Thorpe and Notah Begay III are renowned professional athletes of the Native American descent.

Team based sports of the Native Americans

The official ball sports of the Native Americans which is sometimes called lacrosse, baggataway or stickball had been used as a means of settling conflicts in the past. Lacrosse typically resembles the game of soccer with the inclusion of two goal posts at each side, except that it is played with a stick and with as much players as possible.

Some inventions of the Native Americans that greatly impacted the world

From first producing Kayaks to syringes to corn and rubber, the Native Americans had created highly significant innovations long prior to the arrival of Christopher Columbus to the Americas.

The corn: Yes, while it is a popular food in our present world, the corn was first cultivated by the Native Americans about 10,000 years ago. They then taught the Europeans. The Europeans further took the word and spread it across the western hemisphere and it became a global food staple.

Rubber: It is widely believed that the rubber was first invented by the Native Americans. Then Columbus got hold of it and took it back to Europe. Once there, they had improved on the original Native American blueprint and enhanced with their sophisticated inventions to get what is widely used today in every part of our lives.

Kayaks: The Inuits from the Arctic region first built the kayak with a cockpit that comes sealed to stop the boat paddler from sinking in case the boat capsizes. But fast forward several decades later, the kayak is used all over the world for entertainment, fishing, cultural and religious purposes.

Snow Goggles: Still on the Inuits, they had created special goggles from bone, antler, wood and so on to shield their various eyes from being overly exposed to reflected sunlight emanating from snow expanses. These snow goggles have further been modified to our current day sunglasses.

The Cable-stayed suspension bridge: The South American based Incas actually made cables out of weaved mountain grasses to construct very strong and stable suspension bridge systems across gorges. Several of these structures were a marvel to European engineers as they have never seen longer spans of such bridges before. Years of refinement of the technique gave birth to today’s Cable-stayed suspension bridge system.

Baby Bottles: The Iroquois had used dried and properly greased gut from bears and inserted a nipple obtained from the quill of a bird to produce bottles for the feeding of little babies.

Mouthwash: Several tribes around the Northeastern part of North America has adopted the wildflower known as goldthread for treatment and washing of the mouth for any oral pain.

Oral Contraceptives: Actually the Navajo and Shoshone tribes had used stone seed which was also called Columbia Puccoon as some sort of oral contraceptive. This was years prior to the development of pills for birth control by professional pharmacists.

Hammocks: At the time that Christopher Columbus had touched down around the Caribbean, he had seen natives sleeping in hammocks, bedding materials obtained from the nets of cottons and suspended in the middle of two trees or poles. The Europeans had started making use of them due to the convenience and comfortability that this provides.

Syringes: The Native Americans had created syringes from animal bladders plus hollow bones from birds to get medications injected to sick people. This technique later got adopted by Alexander Wood to Scottish physician in the 1850s to inject in people the pain reliever known as morphine to relieve people from their pain.