

Station 1: Northwest Cultures Timeline

Time		Cultural Periods
Radiocarbon (C14) Years B.P.	Calendar Years A.D./B.C.	
	1500	Historic
1000	1000	Late Prehistoric
2000	1 A.D.	Late Archaic
3000	1000	
4000	2000	
5000	3000	
6000	4000	Middle Archaic
7000	5000	
8000	6000	
9000	7000	Early Archaic
10,000	8000	
	9000	Late Paleoindian
	10,000	Early Paleoindian
11,000	11,000	
11,500	11,500	

The Northwest Coast of North America is a crucial region for the reconstruction of the peopling of the Americas, since North Pacific coast was probably a preferential route for at least one of the migration waves that from Asia, through Beringia, reached North America. Archaeologists indicate three possible migration movements along the Pacific coast. The first, for which there is scant evidence, argues that people moved down the coast by 16,000 BCE. The second is **contemporaneous** (happening at the same time) to the Clovis complex and the third occurred after 9800 BCE.

Pre-Clovis

15,000-12,000 BCE Glaciation begins melting; by 12,000 BCE the coast is completely ice-free

Before 12,000 BCE there is limited evidence of human occupation of the Northwest Coast. Two sites in the Cascadia region, Wilson Butte Cave and Fort Rock Cave, have produced radiocarbon dates earlier than 12,000 BC. However, these data are not completely accepted, since some archaeologists have argued that the deposit was mixed with later materials and samples may not be reliable.

12,000 BCE Date of the earliest evidence of human presence in the region: the Manis site with a projectile point in the fragment of mastodon bone

Clovis and Nenana

Clovis artifacts are rare in the Northwest Coast. Finds include materials recovered along the Oregon coast and a Clovis cache from

Washington. The latter, the Richey-Roberts cache, is not a real residential site but a pit where Clovis bifaces and other objects were buried.

Archaic Period (10,500 - 4400)

A final movement into North America through Beringia (Bering Strait) occurred after **9,800 BCE**, just before the Beringia Land was flooded. This final migration wave marked the expansion of the Dyuktai from Asia to America, where it is called Denali. Important sites of the Archaic period include: Ground Hog Bay, probably the earliest indisputable site on the Northwest Coast, Hidden Falls, Thorne River site, Chuck Lake, Namu, Bear Cove, Glenrose Cannery, Kasta, Milliken site, Five Mile Rapids, Windust.

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Pacific Period (4400 BCE - CE 1775)

The Pacific period spans almost 6000 years and is divided into three main sub-period: Early, Middle and Late Pacific. This period is comprised between the emergence of the traits of complex hunter gatherers on the Northwest Coast and the spread of the first smallpox epidemic linked to the European contact.

- **Early Pacific (4400 - 1800 BCE)**

The Early Pacific period is characterized by the stabilization of the sea levels which allowed a more **sedentary** (sitting, little movement) lifestyle, based mainly on coastal, and riverine resources. Typical of this period are pithouses, in the interior regions, and huge shell middens, on the coast, where shell debris were piled up after consumption creating massive deposits. Burials are also frequent within shell middens. Microblades disappear from Early Pacific stone tool kits, whereas bone and antler tools, celts, and harpoons became more frequent. Important sites include: Namu, Hidden Falls, Boardwalk, Paul Mason, Glenrose, St. Mungo.

- **Middle Pacific (1800 BCE - CE 200/500)**

By 1800 BCE, the Pacific Ocean reached its modern levels and in the coastal rainforest the typical red and yellow cedar species were widespread. To this period dates the first evidence of plank-house villages and the emergence of social inequality, mainly visible in burials goods, and architecture. More specialized fishing tools, such as net weights and composite harpoons are now used to catch salmon, sea otters, seals. Woodworking is represented in high quality products, like cedar boxes, fishing equipment, and canoes. Important sites include: Hidden Falls, Blue Jacker's Creek, Ozette, Marpole, Locarno Beach, Paul Mason, Boardwalk, Glenrose, Palmrose, Pender Island.

- **Late Pacific (CE 200/500 - 1775)**

The climate during the Late Pacific period was basically the same as it is today. Archaeologists believe that there is a strong continuity between the Late Pacific populations and the Native Northwest Coast people encountered by the European. This period marked important changes in technology, burial pattern and settlement organization. Population size may have reached its peak by AD 1000 and then declined. Interment and cremation supplant now the typical midden burials. Important sites include: Ozette, Minard site, Wakemap Mound, Yakutat, Tebenkof Bay Sites, Greenville, Hopetown, Meier, Whale Cove, Hamilton Island, Crescent Beach, Shoemaker Bay, Yuquot, Boardwalk.

- **Modern Period (CE 1775 - present)**

The Modern period spans between the first European contact, the development of the fur trade in the Northwest Coast and the creation of the first reservations. Most of the Northwest Coast art masterpieces are from this historic period. Excavations have focused mainly on Early Modern houses along the coast as well as fur trade posts.

Sources

This glossary entry is a part of the About.com guide to North American Prehistory.

Ames Kenneth M. and Herbert D.G. Maschner, 1999, *Peoples of the Northwest Coast. Their Archaeology and Prehistory*, Thames and Hudson, London

Dixon, James E., 2001, Human colonization of the Americas: timing, technology and process, *Quaternary Science Review*, 20, pp. 277-299

Station 2: Characteristics of the Northwest Coast Cultures

Geographical Setting and Environment

Of the highest importance for the inhabitants of the Northwest Coast was the marine environment. Open sea waters, islands and coastlines were the main resource and represented the everyday landscapes for these people. On its continental lands, the Northwest Coast cultures include an area extending from the Arctic and Subarctic regions near the Copper river in Alaska toward the North and roughly into the Cascade Mountain range towards the East. The southern border coincides with the southern border of Oregon state. Towards the West, the Northern Pacific ocean, with its different climatic zones and life forms, was a pivotal aspect for the region's inhabitants.

Abundant rain and temperate climate in the region has created an environment characterized by a coastal rainforest of western hemlocks, spruces and the precious red cedar. A drier climate is typical of the southern regions, along the Washington and Oregon coasts.

Characteristics of the Northwest Coast Cultures

Archaeologists typically divide the Northwest Coast into a northern, central and southern sub-areas. This is based on the recognition of internal environmental, cultural and linguistic differences. The following is an outline of some of the principal characteristics common to the entire region.

Northwest Coast Settlement and Subsistence

- Salmon constituted the main food resource for the people of the Northwest Coast, integrated with other fish and sea mammals such as herring, halibut and cod, and seals, sea otters and whales. Other resources included birds, plants, roots, seaweed and land mammals like deer, goat and elk.
- Trade along the coast was important for the exchange of everyday goods, as well as valuable items and raw materials. Native copper, for example, originating from southern Alaska, was a highly valuable material exchanged to produce prestige goods, such as ceremonial plaques, called coppers.
- Food preservation and storing was accomplished through drying and smoking.
- The Northwest Coast people made hunting and fishing tools like harpoons, nets, weirs, spears and hooks. Woodworking tools included: stone hammers, adzeblades, celts; and sewing artifacts included needles, bone points and antler objects.
- Whaling was an important activity, not only for the value of whale-derived dietary products (i.e. meat, bones, grease), but also as form of social bonding and status display, since only expert and well-off hunters could afford to sponsor it.

Social Organization of the Northwest Coast

- Complex social organization of the Northwest Coast were primarily based on kinship. Northwest Coast people were organized in tribes, but had social classes and slave labor, elements unusual for general hunter-gatherers but typical of complex hunter gatherer societies.

Station 2: Characteristics of the Northwest Coast Cultures

- Warfare was important and widespread among the different Northwest Coast tribes. Often, war was the means to obtain slaves. Elaborate armor and helmets were used and weaponry included daggers, bow and arrows, spears, and clubs, often decorated with fantastic images of bears, wolves, or human faces.
- Northwest Coast settlements were both seasonal, with larger groups gathered during Winter and smaller, dispersed groups in Spring and Summer, as well as year-around villages.

Northwest Coast Ceremony and Artistry

- Red cedar tree bark and wood was important for a number of things, including basketry, cordage, storage boxes, mats, canoes, planks for houses, in addition to ceremonial objects, such as poles and masks.
- The Northwest Coast people had a rich ceremonial life, involving sophisticated dressing and equipment, which often symbolized status level, such as blankets, nose rings, labrets, and potlatch hats.
- During historic times, potlatch was a widespread ceremonial feast where redistribution of foods and goods occurred. Only the most prominent members of the community could afford to organize a potlatch, and these people were distinguished by typical woven hats with on top as many rings as the number of potlatch offered.
- Finally, Northwest Coast art is famous for its diverse and sophisticated products. These include a wide array of forms and motifs, probably the most famous are totem poles, which, however, are a quite late introduction in Northwest Coast. Painted plank houses, canoes and wooden masks are fine examples of Northwest Coast painting and woodcraft. Further types of artifacts are stone or bone and antler figurines, rock paintings, cedar boxes, stone bowls with human and animal shapes. Motifs included animals important to Northwest Coast subsistence, as well as mythological creatures and humans.

Historic Cultures of the Northwest Coast

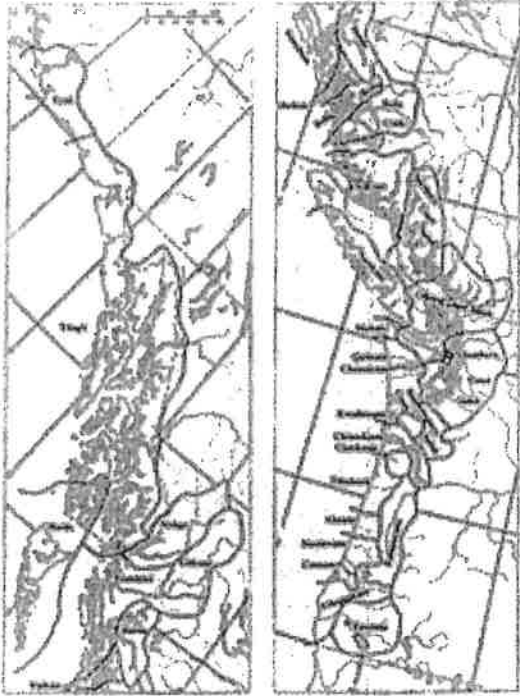
Tlingit, Haida, Tsimshian, Haisla, Nisga'a, Nuxalk, Kwakwaka'wakw (previously known as Kwakiutl), Gitksan, Coast Salish, Makah, Quileute, Nuu-chah-nulth (Nootka), Tillamook, Chinookans, Kalapuyans, Takelma, Alsen, Coosans.

Archaeological Research in the Northwest Coast

First interest in Northwest Coast archaeology arose at the end of the 19th century, with the earliest systematic excavation along the Fraser River in 1895 by Charles Hill-Tout. Harlan Smith was the archaeologist in the expedition led by Franz Boas at the beginning of the 20th century. Archaeological research in the Northwest Coast grew after World War II. Among the many archaeologists who have conducted research in the Northwest Coast, we can cite: Arden King, Frederica de Laguna, Carl Borden, Kenneth Ames, Stephen Samuels, Gary Coupland, Dale Croes, Knut Fladmark, Brian Hayden, Herbert Maschner.

Station 3: Totem Poles

Start here:



Southern Coast Salish Territories

Gyáa'aang is the Haida language word for the tall red cedar poles carved with images from family histories on the northern Northwest Coast. These heraldic columns have come to be called "totem poles." John Wallace, a Haida pole carver, told Viola Garfield that the translation of the word gyáa' aang is "man stands up straight," a descriptive rather than literal translation. The term "totem pole" is not a native Northwest Coast phrase. The figures carved on Northwest Coast poles generally represent ancestors and supernatural beings that were once encountered by the ancestors of the lineage, who thereby acquired the right to represent them as crests, symbols of their identity, and records of their history.

Several different types of these monumental poles include: tall house frontal poles placed against the house front, often serving as doorways of houses with the entrance through a hole at the bottom; carved interior house posts that support roof beams; free standing memorial poles placed in front of houses to

honor deceased chiefs; and mortuary poles made to house the coffins of important people in a niche at the top. Tall multiple-figure poles were first made only by the northern Northwest Coast Haida, Tlingit, and Tsimshian peoples in Southeast Alaska and British Columbia. Large human welcome figures and interior house posts were made by the Kwakwaka'wakw and Nuuchahnulth people further south, and the Coast Salish people in Southern British Columbia and western Washington also carved large human figures representing ancestors and spirit helpers on interior house posts and as grave monuments.

The Haida from the Queen Charlotte Islands in British Columbia and Dall and Prince of Wales Islands in Southeast Alaska have oral histories that indicate the tradition of carving poles is a very ancient one among their people. The very first drawing of a carved house frontal pole on the Northwest Coast was made by John Bartlett in the Haida village of Dadens on North Island in 1791.

Only the best artists were commissioned to carve the monumental heraldic poles that were placed in front of and inside northern Northwest Coast houses proclaiming the identity, status, and history of the noble people who owned them. In ancient times, few noble families could afford to commission these sculptures, but during the nineteenth century the number and size of poles increased dramatically due to a variety of factors, including the increased wealth brought by the fur trade, improved availability of iron tools, and the dynamic social and political environment characterized by new wealth, population loss, family relocations, and chiefly rivalries. The use of the multi-figure poles spread rapidly along the coast

Station 3: Totem Poles

to the Nuxalk (Bella Coola), Heiltsuk (Bella Bella), Kwakwaka'wakw (Kwakiutl), and Nuuchahnulth (Nootkan) peoples. Historic photographs taken in the late nineteenth century on the northern Northwest Coast, especially at Haida villages on the Queen Charlotte Islands and in Southeast Alaska, show the famous "forests of totem poles" in front of the houses.

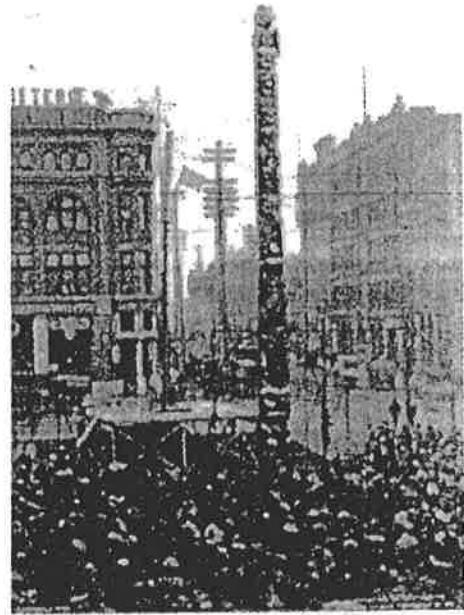
However, by the end of the 1800s, after over a hundred years of contact with people of European descent, explorers, fur traders, missionaries, government agents, colonists and anthropologists, most of these totem poles were gone from the northern Northwest Coast. In the late 1800s most tribes ceased to carve these monumental poles when the **potlatch**, the ceremony held when poles were raised, was made illegal in Canada.

Nevertheless, some families, especially the Kwakwaka'wakw people at the north end of Vancouver Island, continued to potlatch in secret. They carved and raised poles and made many masks to use at these ceremonies. During this time, Indian agents and missionaries discouraged the carving of new poles and the associated ceremonial activities, and people began to move from their old clan houses into single-family frame houses located near fish canneries, lumber mills, and trading posts. Very few old poles still stand in their original locations today. Many of the poles were taken or sold to museums and collectors around the world, others were allowed to decay, or cut down and chopped up.

Ironically, it was during this same late nineteenth period when old poles were disappearing from Native villages and the people were not allowed to raise new ones, that totem poles became a powerful symbol of the Northwest Coast to outsiders, largely through the tourist industry which brought many visitors to the Northwest Coast on steam ships in the 1880s and 1890s. At this time Native artists began to carve small model poles for sale as souvenirs to tourists. Full-sized totem poles were brought to large international expositions such as the Centennial Exposition in Philadelphia in 1876, the World's Columbia Exposition in Chicago in 1893. John Brady, the governor of Alaska, acquired several Tlingit and Haida poles in Southeast Alaska that were exhibited at the World's Fair in St. Louis in 1904, and later at the Lewis and Clark Exposition in Portland in 1905. Most of these poles were later returned to Sitka, Alaska, where they were erected in a public "Totem Park" that was established as a national monument in 1910.

About the Author

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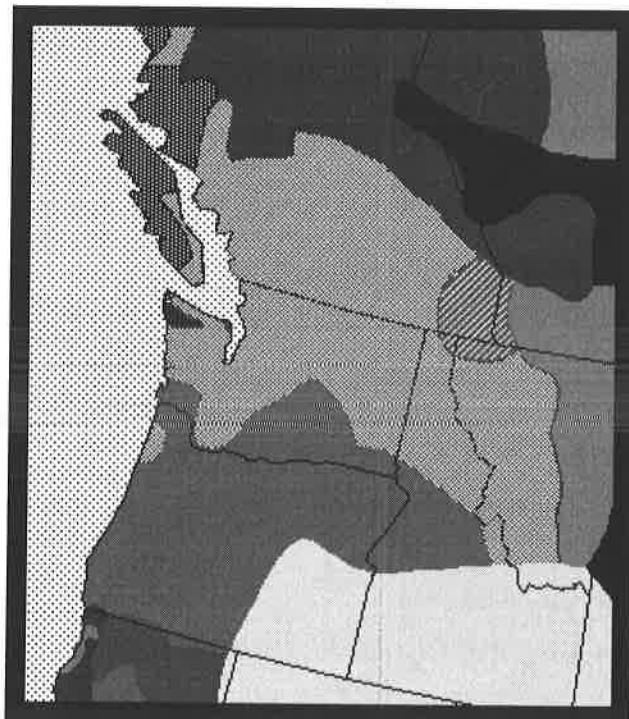











Tlingit totem pole unveiled in Pioneer Square, Seattle - October 1899

Station 4: Mapping & Languages

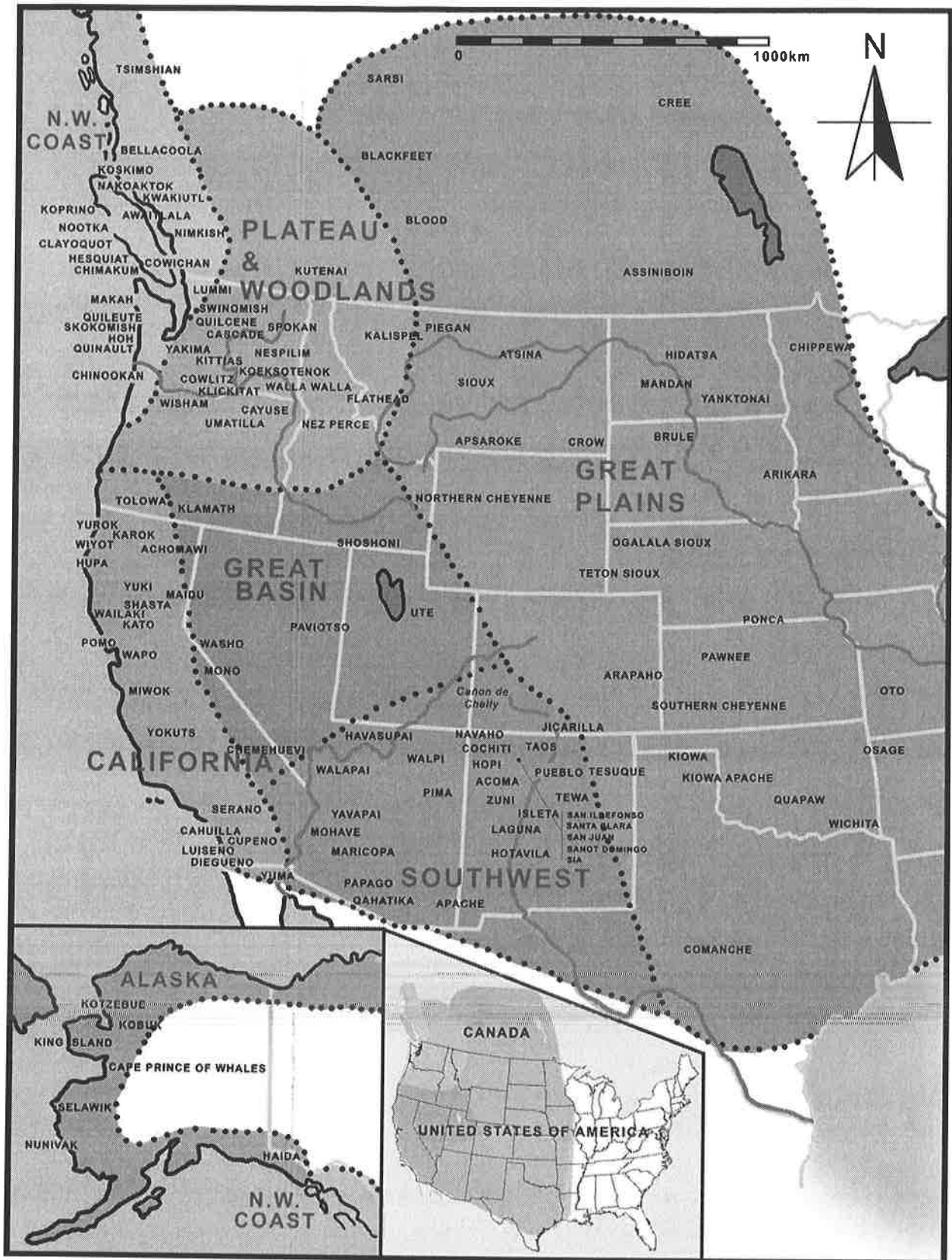


Language Families of the Pacific Northwest

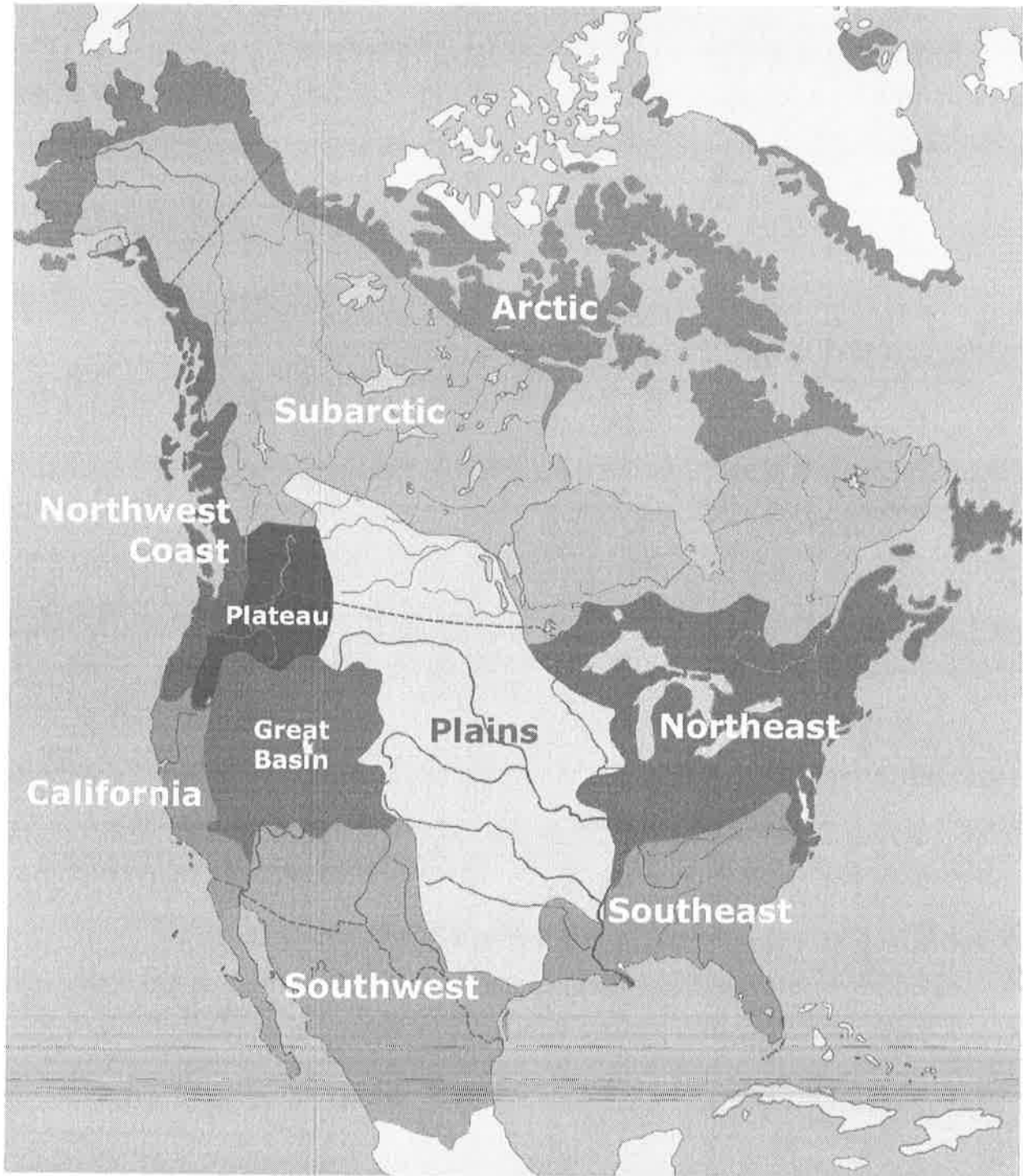


-  Na-Dene
-  Algonquian
-  Penutian
-  Hokan
-  Uto-Aztecan
-  Siouan
-  Salishan
-  Wakashan
-  Chimakuan
-  Kutenai

Station 4: Mapping & Languages



Station 4: Mapping & Languages



Languages

Three principal languages and several sublanguages were spoken by the coastal tribes of Oregon and Washington. The three principal ones were Nootka, Coast Salish and Chinook. In the interior, east of the Cascades, Salish was the principal language, with several sublanguages.

Station 4: Mapping & Languages

Because there was no single language that all tribes spoke or understood, and because the trappers and traders found it impossible to learn all the various dialects, Chinook jargon developed. This was a mixture of Chinook, French, English and a few words of Russian and other European languages.

The tribes had no written language as we know it. This is one reason that so little is known of the native culture before the coming of the white men, who wrote about what they saw. Picture symbols have been found carved in rocks at various places indicating stories and important events in the lives of the tribes at that time. The totem poles of the Indians to the north tell stories of individuals or families. Many symbols were also found carved in wooden and stone household utensils and many of the woven baskets had designs of significance woven into them.

The first attempt to put Indian language into writing was made at Lapwai, Idaho, in the 1830s by early missionary Rev. Henry Spalding and his assistant Asa Smith. The result was numerous variations of spellings for many of the Indian names. Rev. Daniel Lee, a missionary at the Dalles, also noted many of the local dialects in his memoirs after returning to the states. These notations were an important step toward saving some of the history of the tribes of that time period. According to Lee, during the salmon season "there are perhaps five hundred individuals, the remnants of five different tribes, that fish on the Columbia, from the mouth of the river to the Cathlamet Islands, a distance of about twenty-five miles; and the dialects of these clans differ from each other as much as the examples do which I have given":

Killehook Dialect

Checalish Dialect

Clatsop Dialect