



Tlingit Heritage

 **beanstack originals**



Tlingit Heritage

Learn more about Alaska's Indigenous heritage.



For at least 16,000 years, humans have called the lands that now make up the United States home. Thousands of nations and tribes have lived and continue to live across the country. These peoples created many unique heritages. A heritage is a sense of identity, culture, and history that is passed down over time. Read on to learn more about just one part of the country's rich and varied Indigenous heritage.

Learning the History

Some 16,000 years ago, the world was a very different place. It was much colder—so cold that much of the ocean was frozen. Because lots of the water was frozen into ice, there wasn't as much ocean covering the lands. Today, North America and Russia are separated by lots of ocean. But 16,000 years ago, the ocean was low enough that a strip of land connected the two places. Scientists call this land Beringia.

At least 16,000 years ago, people living in what is now Russia began to cross over Beringia. Scientists think these people may have been following the animals they

hunted for food. Some of these people even traveled all the way to North America, to what is now Alaska. Scientists call these people,

DID YOU KNOW?

Scientists think humans may have arrived in North America as many as 33,000 years ago.



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An artist's rendering of a Tlingit fish camp.

the first North Americans, the Clovis people.

Who Are the Tlingit?

Over thousands of years, many of the Clovis people explored the lands across North America. However, some also settled in what is now Alaska. Over time, these people developed different cultures. Some of these include the Tlingit.

FUN FACT

Today, there are more than 570 Indigenous tribes and nations in Alaska.

The Tlingit have traditionally lived along the southwestern coast of what is now Alaska. There, along the coast and across the islands, they built permanent houses from the wood of

nearby trees. They also used this wood to build long canoes. Some were even as long as 60 feet (18.3 m)—that is longer than a sperm whale! The Tlingit were fishers and often used these canoes to fish for salmon. They also survived as hunters, gatherers, seafarers, and traders.

Art and Culture

The Tlingit have developed a unique style of art. This art features bold, geometric lines and rich colors. It also often shows animals such as bears, fish, birds, wolves, and more. Tlingit art often appears in a special style of weaving, called Chilkat weaving. This weaving is



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Chilkat blanket.

done by hand, and it is often used to make thick, beautifully decorated blankets.

Because there are many trees in the area, Tlingit art also often includes carving wood. These carvings can appear on the sides of buildings, ceremonial knives, bowls, spoons, furniture, and more. One of the most famous examples of this art style is the totem pole. Carved from enormous wooden pillars, totem poles are used to celebrate and tell the stories of local histories, people, and more.