

Early Human Development within The Americas



- Migration Theories
- Archaeological Challenges
- Language Development
- Population Density
- Technology

Migration



- ❧ like ancient human development in Africa, Near, Middle, & Far East, emergence of First Nations of North & South America required thousands of years of migration
- ❧ human development of Wisconsin glaciation era (50000 - 10000 BCE) was rapid compared to earlier Paleolithic & Neolithic eras
- ❧ ancient American habitat is no longer debated, but possible migration routes remains controversial topic

Archaeological Challenges

- ❧ ancient human presence in Americas is problematic...
 - ❧ based more on artifacts than skeletal remains
 - ❧ fractured pebbles (100000-200000 BCE) found in California
 - ❧ oldest skull found in Texas dated to 11600 years ago
 - ❧ controversy over Bering Strait migration ("Land Bridge") theory
- ❧ majority of First Nations insist that Americas are their land of origin
 - ❧ Gitskan believe northern BC is their "Garden of Eden"

Land Bridge Theory



- ☞ some First Nations trace their origins to Bering Strait migration theory
 - ☞ Tsimshian of North Pacific have “Land Bridge” creation theory
- ☞ many archaeologists maintain Homo Sapiens came from Asia to Americas following hunt of big game (Mammoths & Mastodons)
 - ☞ low sea during glaciation exposed submerged land of Bering Strait
 - ☞ recent studies indicate birch and shrub willows once covered Bering Strait ocean floor

Ancient Languages of The Americas



- ❧ language is one of many cultural features that strengthen evidence of humans in Americas earlier than 10000 BCE
- ❧ Pacific coasts of Americas are most complex linguistic regions in the world
 - ❧ estimated over 2200 different languages by 16th century
- ❧ accepted theory that diverse languages require thousands of years of human presence in a location
 - ❧ could be evidence of humans in Americas beyond 10000-50000 BCE
 - ❧ campsites in New Mexico have been carbon-dated over 36000 years
 - ❧ hunters of Bluefish Caves in Yukon left 24000-12000 year old debris

More Evidence Needed



- ❧ some inaccurately dated artifacts confuse issue of estimating early human migration to Americas
 - ❧ 1000 year old caribou bone flesher once dated over 27000 years old
- ❧ best evidence of humans in Americas beyond 10000 BCE would be skeletal remains to go with ancient artifacts and (perhaps even Homo Erectus)
- ❧ some archaeologists theorize such evidence could be below sea level along Pacific coasts that were flooded during glacial retreat

Population Densities



- since greatest concentration of languages was along Pacific Coast, highest population density also located there during first southward migration

- estimates as high as 10% of ancient world population

- early migrations would have been small for survival concerns

- 25 individuals can increase to 10 million over 500 years if generations double every 30 years

- disappearing animal species also support dense population theories

- 11000 years ago – last mammoth and mastodon kills

- 11000-8000 years ago – over 200 species disappeared in Americas

- hunting practices also hint at growing populations

- 8000-6000 BCE – Natives of the Plains began to drive Bison over cliffs instead of hunting individual animals

Technological Innovation

- **Mesolithic & Neolithic technology reached highest point of development in Americas**
 - **Ranging from delicate projectile crafted points to massive stone temples in Central America**
- **rediscovery of stone chipping skill through artifacts**
- **Native technicians had great knowledge of materials**
 - **where to find resources**
 - **how they could be worked during production**
 - **how they could be used for everyday survival**
 - **how they could perform under certain conditions (changing season)**
 - **how they could be improved for better performance**