Native North Americans: The First Settlers

Native Americans were the first people to live in what is now the U.S. They were here thousands of years before Europeans came. The Native Americans lived in groups. The groups were Native Nations. Each group lived in its own way. Each nation had its own language. Each had its own culture. Each nation had its own traditions. Many Native Americans believed that land was sacred. It was like air or water. They took care of their land. But, they did not think that land could be owned.

In the early 1600s, life changed for Native Americans. European settlers came to North America. They began claiming land as their own. They took any land that they wanted. Many Native American leaders tried to protect their lands. They fought against the settlers. Other Native American leaders tried to save their land by making treaties with the Europeans. Some Native Americans helped the settlers.

By the late 1700s, life was very difficult for the Native Americans. The settlers brought guns, alcohol, and disease to the native lands. Many Native Americans died as a result. Others lost their land. They were forced to live on reservations.

In spite of these problems, many Native Americans did not give up. They took pride in their culture. Many kept up their traditional ways. They continued to have hope.