

Cultural Periods in Arkansas

Archeologists name time periods in Native American history, based on changes in American Indians' cultures. Cultures differ based on the environment, the type of foods people ate, the tools they used, the sites they lived in, and what their communities looked like. By studying American Indian's ways of life and how they changed over time, archeologists identify cultural periods, or lengths of time when people share similar ways of life. In the southeastern United States, there are five broad time periods.

Paleoindian Period (11,500 – 8500 BC): This is when Indians first arrived in Arkansas, at the end of the last Ice Age. They hunted large animals including mammoths and mastodons using atlatls, or spearthrowers, but gathered only a little plant food.

Archaic Period (8500 – 600 BC): Archaic Indians hunted, fished, and gathered many wild plants. They camped in a different place every year.

Woodland Period: (600 BC – AD 900): Woodland Indians lived in small villages all year long. They grew garden crops during the summer. They made and used pottery. They hunted with the bow and arrow instead of a spear thrower and collected nuts and berries.

Mississippi Period: (900 – 1600 AD): Mississippian Indians lived in large towns. They grew corn, beans, and squash in large fields. They hunted and fished, and collected a little wild plant food.

Age of Discovery (1500 - 1700 AD): The era of European discovery and exploration of North American, when Native Americans and Europeans first met

In Lessons 2 through 5, students will complete a timeline for each of these periods and the important changes that take place.

