



## IN THE TIME OF THE DAWN

500-1,200 years ago

As soon as glacial ice retreated, Native people occupied the land. At first, they lived in a landscape of mixed tundra and scrub forests. Eventually, as the climate warmed, mixed forests took hold and the great rivers of the state became established. Communities of hunters and gatherers collected shellfish on the coast, fished for salmon along the rivers and hunted moose in the interior forests. Trade networks connected people from Labrador south to the mid-Atlantic and west to the Great Lakes.

### **The Ceramic Period: 500-3000 years ago**

The introduction of pottery making into the archaeological record around 3,000 years ago marks the beginning of the time period archaeologists call the Ceramic Period. Ceramic Period sites are the most abundant in Maine, reflecting increased populations and expansion of territories. Coastal sites are especially common, where people collected shellfish and seasonally abundant plant foods, and fished and hunted.

Decorative designs on clay pots change through time. Just as we can identify the decade when a car was made by its style, so do archaeologists use ceramic design changes to date the Ceramic Period. From the earliest, fabric-impressed pottery through the geometrically-stamped dentate to the most recent, linear incised style, pottery decoration helps document the last 3,000 years of pre contact history



The Ceramic Period toolkit found in coastal sites contains a variety of bone implements as well as chipped stone tools.  
Reconstruction of a Ceramic Period clay pot. Illustration by David Putnam

### **Oral Tradition: Prophecy of the Seven Fires**

Prophecy of the Seven Fires (seven prophets) foretold the coming of the Europeans to this continent 3,000 years ago. In response to the urging of these native spiritual visionaries, sometime about 1000 years ago many Natives left the Northeastern salt water shores and migrated inland along what is now the St Lawrence River. Over time newer native settlements were created during this massive migration.



As recounted by Eddie Bassett, Jr., Passamaquoddy Photo from Diorama at Abbe Sieur de Monts

### **The Archaic Period: 3,000 – 9,000 years ago**

Climatic warming had transformed Ice Age Maine into a northern forest environment of mixed hardwoods and softwoods. The great rivers of the state were established and became important sources for food, and as highways between the interior and coast.

The Archaic Period toolkit is marked by the introduction and prominence of ground stone tool technology. Ground stone tools like gouges, celts, axes, slate points, bayonets and rods were part of a tool kit for people living in and harvesting resources of the mixed northern forests, the rivers and sea.



### **The Paleoindian Period: 9,000 – 11,500 years ago**

The Paleoindian tradition refers to the earliest archaeological evidence for people in the Northeast following the end of the Ice Age. Following the retreat of massive glaciers that had covered Maine and extended south to Cape Cod, people following large animals such as woolly mammoth began to inhabit the mixed tundra-woodland environment. The Paleoindian toolkit included finely chipped spear points, scrapers for

preparing hides and working wood, and gravers for incising bone. Finely made fluted points are the hallmark artifacts of the Paleoindian tradition.



Cast of a fluted spear point

### **Oral Tradition: How Glooskap made the Animals Small**

Glooskap made all the animals. He made them, at first, very large.

Then he said to Moose, the great Moose who was as tall as Ketawku's [a giant, high as the tallest pines], "What would you do should you see an Indian coming?" Moose replied, "I would tear down the trees on him." Then Glooskap saw that the Moose was too strong, and made him smaller, so that Indians could kill him.

Then he said to the Squirrel, who was of the size of a Wolf, "What would you do if you should meet an Indian?" And the Squirrel answered, "I would scratch down trees on him." Then Glooskap said, "You also are too strong", and he made him little. So he questioned all the beasts, changing their size or allotting their lives according to their answers. Adapted from *The Algonquin Legends of New England* by Charles G. Leland, 1884

### **Glacial Retreat: 12,000 years ago**

Glaciers retreat leaving much of Maine a treeless tundra.