

Tlingit Indians

by Kenric

Where did the tribe live? Where do the people live now? They live in southern Alaska and in British Columbia and the Yukon in Canada.

What did they eat? They ate fish, sea mammals, deer, mountain goats, caribou, moose, shellfish, seaweed, berries, and roots. The men did the hunting, and the women did the gathering.

What did they wear? The Tlingit men wore breechcloths, and the women wore short skirts made of cedar bark. If they lived where the weather was colder, the women wore longer deerskin dresses, and the men wore pants with moccasins attached. Even in the snow, most of the women went barefoot, but the men wore snowshoes for winter hunting trips.

What special ceremonies did they have? The Tlingit held special ceremonies called potlatches. Potlatches were held for a funeral, to witness payment of a debt, the completion of a new house, a wedding, naming of a child, or erection of a totem pole. They might last days and would include feasting, speeches, singing, and dancing. Guests are paid with gifts during the ceremony.

What kind of homes did they build? The Tlingits built rectangular shaped houses made of cedar planks and bark roofs. Each house had up to 50 people from the same clan living in it.



Interesting Facts:

1. The Tlingit language has many sounds that don't exist in English. An easy word is "gunalcheesh" (sounds like gu-nall-chaish). This means "thank you."
2. The Tlingit's war canoes were more than 60 feet long and could withstand ocean storms.
3. The Tlingit were afraid of drowning. They believed they would turn into a Koosda, which is the feared Land Otter People, human from the waist up and otter from the waist down.
4. The Tlingit did not believe in one God. They believed everything has a spirit and is alive, even a rock or a house.
5. Between 1886 and 1895 the Tlingit converted to Christianity because their tribal healer could not cure diseases like small pox.