Northwest Coast
Food

The Indians of the Northwest Coast got a lot of their food from the ocean. They ate fish and shellfish. Fish called salmon was one of their main foods. In the spring, the salmon swam upstream to lay their eggs. The Indians lined up along the riverbank and trapped the salmon. This was called the “salmon run.”

Northwest Coast Indians also hunted larger sea animals. They hunted seals, porpoises, and whales. On land, they hunted deer, goats, and bears.
Northwest Coast

Shelter

The Northwest Coast Indians lived in villages. Their houses always faced the water. Houses were made out of planks of cedar wood from the forests. A plank is a long, thin piece of wood. These houses were called plank houses. Plank houses were large. Four or five families could live in one. Totem poles stood outside each house.

A totem pole is a tall wooden log that has carvings of things in nature on it. The carvings told about each family’s history.
These Indians were great wood carvers. They carved wooden animals. They carved wooden tools. They even carved wooden poles. A totem pole is a tall wooden pole. It has carvings of things from nature on it. Each totem pole told the story of a family’s history. Totem poles were put outside the plank houses. These Indians liked big parties.

Their parties were called potlatches. People from nearby villages were asked to come.
The person giving the party gave away the things he owned. He did this to show how rich he was.
Northwest Coast
Transportation

Indians in this region traveled by foot. They also used big trees from the forests to make dugout canoes.

They did not have sharp tools to chop down the trees or carve them. Instead, they used fire to help them. First, they put a circle of clay around the bottom of the tree. Then they started a fire. The tree burned around the bottom. The fire was put out. The Indians then scraped the burnt wood from the tree. Then they set another fire. The tree burned a little more around the same circle. They put out the fire. Then the burned wood was scraped off again.
They kept doing this until the tree fell. They did the same thing to hollow out the inside of the canoe. One end of the canoe was always pointed. Sometimes they carved animals or things in nature on the ends or along the sides of the canoes.
Northwest Coast
Physical Surroundings, Location, and Climate

This region is on the west coast of North America. It goes from southern Alaska into Washington, Oregon, and California. The ocean is on the west. Mountains are on the east. The Indians lived on the land in between. There were thick forests. There were many rivers and streams. The Indians who lived here had a lot of food. Salmon was one of their favorites.