

We Saw Him First!: Early Peoples of the Caribbean Outreach Kit

Information for the Teacher

This outreach kit can be presented as an exhibit as well as hands-on activity/lesson kit. A series of suggested activities for several grade levels and competencies are included. All activities are designed to encourage divergent thinking skills and/or appeal to multiple ways of learning.

This binder includes more detailed information for the teacher. In addition, there is an edited version of Columbus' diary and an article on the Encounter from the view of the native people. This last account is based on historic records and presents real native people. There is also a bibliography of sources used. Because of the coverage from the Columbus encounter commemoration activities in 1992, there should be many resource materials in the school as well as public libraries.

Illustrations used are, as much as possible, from accounts of the early voyages and the island people. Most photographs of San Salvador Island were made by Museum of Anthropology Education staff over several seasons of study there. All the artifacts included in the kit are real except for the zemi reproductions from the Museum of Puerto Rico. The objects from San Salvador are the results of archeological research there by the Museum's former director, Dr. Mary Jane Berman and Wake Forest University students. Objects from Antigua were donated to the Museum for educational use. We included ties to North Carolina wherever appropriate to inform the students of the relationships of the Caribbean's history to their own state history. For instance, tobacco, that was later to become paramount in North Carolina's economy, first came from the Caribbean. The native tobacco grown in Carolina was deemed too harsh by the Europeans so they imported the sweeter Caribbean variety. This variety is what we grow in our state.

PANEL TEXT

Panel 1

This section introduces the varied environments and resources of the Caribbean as well as teaches the three cultural divisions of the area. Using the early map of the Caribbean or one of your own, students can examine the island groups' locations while someone reads about the geographic and geologic differences.

CARIBBEAN SETTLEMENT BEFORE COLUMBUS

Indians from Central America settled these islands over 6,000 years ago. They were hunter/gatherer/fishers. Then, about 2,300 years ago, Indians from South America moved onto the islands closest to them, the Lesser Antilles. Later, Indians moved from these islands northward on to the Greater Antilles. The last islands to be settled were the Bahamas.

GEOGRAPHY

The Caribbean is a scattering of islands that spread over nearly 3,000 miles of ocean. The islands are grouped into three areas: the Bahamas, the Greater Antilles, and the Lesser Antilles.

The climate of all the islands is sub-tropical, generally warm, but with very different amounts of rainfall. Some islands in the Antilles have mountains. A few of the bigger ones have rivers and fertile valleys. Some islands have tropical rainforests, while others are dry and desert-like. Some islands even have savannas (grasslands) that are good today for grazing herd animals.

Almost all of the islands have coastal flatlands and beaches.

The Bahamas consist of coral reefs and rocks. The soil is poor and will not support large farms. (Blue on map.)

The Greater Antilles are four large islands, Cuba, Hispaniola (Dominican Republic and Haiti), Puerto Rico, and Jamaica. These islands have mountains, plains and lowlands. Different amounts of rainfall produce many kinds of environments. These islands can support large populations. (Green on map.)

The Lesser Antilles are closest to South America. They are the peaks of underwater volcanoes. These islands vary from rugged mountains, to gentle slopes of rich volcanic soils, to coral reefs.
(Red on map.)

PANEL 2: EARLY MAP OF THE CARIBBEAN

PANEL 3: THE LESSER ANTILLES

The Lucayos and people of the Greater Antilles told Columbus that the inhabitants of the Lesser Antilles were cannibals and warlike people who raided the Taino chiefdoms. It is not at all certain that this is a true picture. What is known of the Arawak speakers of these islands is that they were cassava farmers and collected foods from the sea. Of all the Caribbean islands, only the people of the Lesser Antilles made a wine-like drink from pineapple and grew peppers. The alcoholic pineapple drink was said to improve the appetite of people who were ill.

PANELS 4-5: THE TAINO (ARAWAKS) OF THE GREATER ANTILLES

This section introduces the Greater Antilles where varying environments and greater land masses allowed larger populations. A good amount of archeological research has been done in the Greater Antilles and it contributes to the information below.

Columbus describes the Taino (Ta-ee'-no) living on the Greater Antilles as having many layers of society. At the top was a "King", then there were "Caciques" (Ca-see'-kays) or governors of districts. Below these were the "nitainos" (nee-ta-ee'-nos), or nobles. Then there were the commoners, and finally the unfree "nabotias" (na-bo-tee'-ahs). Many people lived to old age. Columbus reports that some adults wore no clothes. Others wore small aprons or loin cloths. Pregnant women wore a cotton skirt. Women usually had between three and five children.

In the Greater Antilles the houses were bigger than those on the Bahamas. Commoners houses, called caney (cane'-ees), were circular, 30-40 feet across. (See the caney model in the kit.) They did not have separate rooms. By using building materials (grasses) or different colors, the people created decorative designs inside and out. Columbus says the insides of the houses looked as if they had been painted because the builders used colored cane to weave figures into the matting that formed the walls.

The chief's house, called a bohio (bo-hee'-oh), was quite large and faced onto an open area where public meetings took place. Here, in the village center, the people held their dances and played ball games. Their ball games may have been similar to those played on the Middle American mainland. Archeologists have found stone belts somewhat like those used in the Maya ball games. There were competitions between villages. Even women had their own teams and competed against women in other towns.

Like the Lucayo (Lu-cai'-oh), the people of the large islands were farmers, hunters, and fishers. Their crops and other foods were like that of the Bahamas. They planted using stone hoes and digging sticks. Their root crops were planted in mounds of soil. They planted vines and climbing crops in the same mounds. As the plants spread over the ground, they kept down weed growth and helped soil erosion during rain. These gardens were called "conucos" (co-new'-cos). At least on Hispanola, it was

the task of children to keep the parrots from eating the corn as it grew in the fields.

The plants the Taino grew did not need a lot of labor. Neither did they exhaust the soil's fertility. Many of the crops could be harvested over a long period of time. Most were being grown year round. Irrigation was used in many areas. People even diverted rivers to their fields.

The Taino fished in rivers, streams, and the ocean using a variety of methods such as nets and traps. At one site on Cuba, the people kept live fish in a large pen. There also were birds and waterfowl to eat. The only animal that may have been domesticated was the guinea-pig-like hutia (oo-tee'-ah).

Among "other things" Columbus said he received from the Taino in Cuba were tobacco leaves. Columbus did not know what they were or imagine how important tobacco would become to European trade and to history. In addition to being smoked in a "Y" shaped tube and snuffed, tobacco may have served as an insect repellent. The Caribbean Indians also gave Columbus "bixa" (bi'-sha) a red earth with which they painted themselves. This is probably the origin of the term "Red Indian", since Columbus describes the Indians skin as being nearly white. Black body paint came from the wood of a tree. Native cotton, which was highly valued and traded by the Taino, grew on tall bushes or trees

PANELS 6-9 – THE LUCAYOS: THE PEOPLE WHO MET COLUMBUS

The people who first met Columbus were Taino speakers who called themselves Lucayo, which means “island people”. They had lived in the Bahamas around 1,200 years before this meeting. The study island for this exhibit was called Guanahani (Gua-na-ha'-ni) by the Lucayo. Columbus named it San Salvador.

The Lucayos lived in communities headed by a cacique (ca-seek'-kay), or chief. The chief's house was larger than the ordinary person's house because it was used for community meetings. The ordinary person's house was round and tall, made from poles and thatch. The insides were swept clean. Their beds, which were hammocks, could be hung inside the house from the poles that made the frame. The hammocks and some other household items were made of cotton. They sat on stools, called duhos (du'-hoses).

Most of the Lucayo's daily life took place outside. People made pots from clay and baskets from plants growing on the islands.

Included in the kit are examples of two fibers that were used to make baskets in the Caribbean (sea grass and palm leaf). The outer covering of the palm frond is removed and inside are the long fibers that can be woven. Before weaving, these fibers were soaked in water to soften them.

They cooked a flat bread made from cassava (ca-sa'-va) on griddles made from slabs of clay.

Cassava was grown by breaking a branch of a plant into several pieces. Each piece was then set into the soil. After a few days, the cutting budded and took root. There are two kinds of cassava. One is bitter and poisonous. The other is not poisonous and sweet. Sweet cassava was boiled or roasted and eaten as a vegetable.

The Lucayos made bread from the bitter, poisonous cassava. They removed the poison by first grating the cassava tuber on a grater made from tiny pieces of stone pushed into a piece of wood (there is an illustration of a grater on panel 3). A chunk of cassava was rubbed over the tiny stone blades which reduced the chunk to a shredded mass. They placed this shredded mass into a strainer that looked like a woven sack. (See the small version of a cassava squeezer in the kit). These strainers were usually more than three feet long. The sack was twisted and a milky

poisonous juice would flow out. After the juice was removed, the remaining cassava was formed into loaves and cooked. The cooked loaves could be kept for over a year and could be moved from place to place. The Indians carried cassava bread on all their long canoe trips to other islands.

Guanahani (San Salvador) was the first island that Columbus visited. He arrived on Thursday, October 11, 1492. (Read the excerpts from Columbus' Diary included in this binder and have students do activities 4-6, listed in the back, as appropriate to grade level. Activity 4 could be class discussion). By 1513, Guanahani and all the other islands of the Bahamas were empty of native people because of diseases and Indian slave trading by the Spanish. Subtract the year of Columbus' first visit from 1513 to see how long it took the Spanish to destroy the native populations of the Bahamas.

Where did the Spanish take the Lucayo slaves?

Many were taken to Spanish plantations and gold mines on islands of the Greater Antilles like Hispanola. Others were taken to islands off of Venezuela to work as divers in pearl beds.

The Lucayo and people of Guanahani were farmers who grew crops such as cassava, maize, beans, peanuts, sweet potatoes, squash, and fruits such as guava, papaya (mamey), and pineapple.

They balanced these starchy crops with protein (fish and shellfish) from the ocean. They hunted a small animal called the utia. It looked something like a guinea-pig. They also hunted and ate iguana.

PANEL 10 – RELIGION

There were several Taino deities (gods). Images of these are found throughout the Caribbean on rock art and on artifacts. Representations of the gods are called zemis. (See the casts of zemis included in the kit as well as other ceremonial objects.)

- **Yucahu:** The supreme being and the spirit of cassava.
 - Zemis of Yacahu, which are usually triangular in shape, were buried in cassava fields to ensure successful crops.
- **Atabey:** mother of Yucahu and goddess of fertility.
- **Bairama:** assisted in growing cassava and in curing people poisoned by cassava juice.
- **Boinayel:** son of the gray serpent, was the rain god.
- **Marohu:** brother of Boinayel, was the god of fair weather.
- **Guabancex:** the lady of the wind (hurricane)
- **Itiba Cahubasba:** the Earth Goddess
- **Opiyelguobiran:** the dog deity who watched over the spirits of the dead.

PANEL 11: WHAT HAPPENED TO THE CARIBBEAN NATIVES?

The Lucayos were taken to the larger islands as slaves. People of the Antilles also were enslaved by the Spanish. They were mistreated and died of disease, exhaustion, and poor nutrition. Most of the native populations were wiped out by 1520. A few survived in isolated mountain areas of the Greater Antilles until the early 1600's. By 1518 there were not enough Indians left to satisfy the Spanish slave labor needs so they began importing slaves from Africa. (Read *Columbus, My Enemy*, included in this binder, to get a Taino view of the early contact years. This article is based on historic record and is an excellent way to contrast the Columbus Diary. The people named in the article were real people who, rather than placidly accepting Spanish domination, fought with all their skills, both diplomatic and military. This is information that is seldom included in lessons about the Encounter.)

Today, a few hundred Island Caribs (care'-ribs), the only remaining evidence of the original Indians, live on the island of Dominica (Dom-ee-knee'-ca). (Have students locate Dominica on the map.) These people are a blend of African and Indian ancestors. Some of the physical traits of the Indians, including straight black hair, may be seen in this group. A few words of their ancient native tongue survive in their present-day language.

ECOLOGY ACTIVITY

This hands-on activity goes with Panel 12, and is best completed in several small groups.

Caribbean corals:

These corals are only a few of the kinds found in the Caribbean. Match the number on the coral to the number on the label to find out the name of the type of coral. Look up the corals in the field guide in the kit or in an encyclopedia. What more can you find out about these types and corals in general?

Two small boxes containing sand:

Using the magnifying lens on the boxes, examine the sand from San Salvador and from Georgia. How are they similar? How are they different?

Why do you think the color is similar?

Notice the San Salvador sand is rounded. This is because it is made of soft calcium carbonate. This is what shells and the limestone rocks of the islands are made from.

Notice the Georgia sand is more jagged in shape. This sand is made from silica, a harder material found in the rocks of coastal North America.

READING & WRITING ACTIVITIES

1. Look at the card in the kit titled “Taino Words We Use Today,” and have students write a story incorporating these words.

TAINO WORDS WE USE TODAY

Hamaca	hammock
Canoa	canoe
Tabac (actually the name for the Y shaped pipe)	cigar
Barbecoa	barbeque
Hurricane	hurricane
Savanna	savanna
Canniba	cannibal
Batata	sweet potato
Casaba	cassava
Maiz	maize
Guava	guava
Papaya	papaya

2. Read from the Columbus *Diario* excerpts provided. Have students record what Columbus said about how the people of Guanahani looked, and other information about their lives and activities.

3. Draw a Lucayo or construct a Lucayo village based on Columbus’ descriptions.

4. After reading from Columbus’ *Diario* to the students, have them write about that day pretending they were Lucayos. From this perspective, have them describe the event as if for a diary.

5. Have students compare and contrast the Columbus *Diario* with *Columbus, My Enemy*.

OTHER ACTIVITES

1. Make copies of the coloring sheets included in the kit and have students color Taino scenes.
2. Have the students bring in samples of some of the foods Caribbean peoples ate. Students could research these foods and perhaps find recipes including them. Most grocery stores carry many of these fruits and vegetables.
3. Using travel brochures, travel magazines, etc. have students collect pictures showing the various geographic environments found in the Caribbean. These can be displayed as a poster, montage, or scrapbook.

**EXCERPTS FROM
THE DIARIO OF CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS'S
FIRST VOYAGE TO AMERICA**

Abstracted by Fray Bartolome de las Casas

First Contact *Thursday, October 11, 1492*

The Admiral (Columbus) was certain that they were near land, ...

The Admiral entreated and admonished them (*sailors*) to keep a good lookout on the forecastle and to watch carefully for land; ...

At two hours after midnight the land appeared, from which they were two leagues distant.

They hauled down all the sails ...

until daylight Friday, when they reached an islet of the **Lucayas**, which was called **Guanahani** in the language of the Indians.

Soon they saw naked people; and the Admiral went ashore in the armed launch....

Thus put ashore they saw very green trees and many ponds and fruits of various kinds.

The admiral called to the two captains and to the others who had jumped ashore ...

And he said that they should be witnesses that....

he would take possession of the said island for the king and for the queen his lords,...

Soon many people of the island gathered there.

What follows are the very words the Admiral in his book about the first voyage to, and discovery of, these Indies.

I, he says, in order that they (*the natives*) would be friendly to us – because I recognize that they were people

who would be better freed [from error (sin)]

and converted to our Holy Faith by love than by force - -

to some of them I gave red caps, and glass beads which they put on their chests, and many other things of small value, in which they took so much pleasure and became so much our friends that it was a marvel.

Later they came swimming to the ships' launches where we were and brought us parrots and cotton thread in balls and javelins and many other things, and they traded them to us for other things which we gave them, such as small glass beads and bells.

In sum, they took everything and gave of what they had very willingly.

But it seemed to me that they were a people very poor in everything.

All of them go around as naked as their mothers bore them;

and the women also, although I did not see more than one quite young girl.
And all those that I saw were young people,
for none did I see of more than 30 years of age.
They are very well formed, with handsome bodies and good faces.
Their hair [is] course – almost like the tail of a horse - and short.
They wear their hair down over their eyebrows
except for a little in the back which they wear long and never cut.
Some of them paint themselves with black,
and they are of the color of the
Canarians (Canary Islanders), neither black nor white;
and some of them paint themselves with white, and some of them with red,
and some of them with whatever they find.
And some of them paint their faces, and some of them the whole body,
and some of them only the eyes, and some of them only the nose.
They do not carry arms nor are they acquainted with them,
because I showed them swords and they took them by the edge
and through ignorance cut themselves. They have no iron.
Their javelins are shafts without iron
and some of them have at the end a fish tooth and others of other things.
All of them alike are of good- sized stature and carry themselves well.
I saw some who had marks of wounds on their bodies
and I made signs to them asking what they were,
and they showed me how people from other islands nearby came there
and tried to take them, and how they defended themselves; ...
They should be good and intelligent servants,
for I see that they say very quickly everything that is said to them;
and I believe that they would become Christians very easily,
for it seemed to me that they had no religion. ...
I will take six of them from here to Your Highnesses
in order that they may learn to speak.
No animal of any kind did I see on this island except parrots.

Saturday, October 13

As soon as it dawned, many of these people came to the beach –
all young as I have said, and all of good stature –
very handsome people, with hair not curly but straight and coarse, like horsehair;
and all of them very wide in the forehead and head, ...
And their eyes are very handsome and not small; ...
all alike have very straight legs and no belly but are very well formed.
They came to the ship with dugouts that are made from the trunk of one tree,
like a long boat, and all of one piece,
and worked marvelously in the fashion of the land,
and so big that in some of them 40 and 45 men came.
And others smaller, down to some in which came one man alone.
They row with a paddle like that of a baker and go marvelously.
And if it capsizes on them they then throw themselves in the water,
and they right and empty it with calabashes (gourds), that they carry.
They brought balls of spun cotton and parrots and javelins and other little things
that it would be tiresome to write down,
and they gave everything for anything that was given to them.
I was attentive and labored to find out if there was any gold;
and I saw that some of them wore a little piece
hung in a hole that they have in their noses.
And by signs I was able to understand that,
going to the south or rounding the island to the south,
there was there a king who had large vessels of it and had very much gold.
I strove to get them to go there and later saw that they had no intention of going....

This island is quite big and very flat and with very green trees
and much water and a very large lake in the middle and without any mountains;
and all of it so green that it is a pleasure to look at it.
And these people are very gentle,
and because of their desire to have some of our things,
and believing that nothing will be given to them without their giving something,
and not having anything, they take what they can
and then throw themselves into the water to swim.
But every they have they give for anything given to them,
for they traded even for pieces of bowls and broken glass cups,
and I even saw 16 balls of cotton given for
three Portuguese [coins of small value] ...
It (cotton) grows here on this island, ...
Now, since night had come, all the Indians went ashore in their dugouts.

Sunday October 14

As soon as it dawned I ordered the ship's boat and the launches ...
made ready and went north north-east along the island
in order to see what there was in the other part, which was the eastern part.
And also to see the villages, and I soon saw two or three,
as well as people, who all came to the beach calling to us ...
Some of the brought us water; others, other things to eat;
others, when they saw that I did not care to go ashore,
threw themselves into the sea swimming and came to us ...
Many men came, and many women, each one with something, ...
and afterward they called to us in loud voices to come ashore.
But I was afraid, seeing a big stone reef that encircled that island all around.
And between the reef and shore there was depth and harbor ...,
and the entrance to it is very narrow. ...
Inside this belt of stone (reef) the sea is no more disturbed than inside a well.

And those men whom I had taken told me by signs
that they (the islands) were so very many that they were numberless.
And they named by their names more than a hundred.
Finally I looked for the largest and to that one I decided to go ...
It is about five leagues distant from this island of **San Salvador**.

Monday, October 15

...a large dugout was alongside the caravel *Nina*.
And one of the men from the island of **San Salvador** who was in the *Nina*
threw himself into the sea and went away in the dugout.
And the night before, at midnight, another man had thrown himself into the sea
and fled ...

The following section can be used to connect this outreach kit to the US history and/or North Carolina history curriculum.

CARIBBEAN COLONIAL HISTORY

In the early 1500s, Spain explored and claimed as “La Florida” much of the southern part of North America as well as Mexico, Middle America, and the west coast of South America. At first, none of the European countries paid much attention to the Caribbean. However, these countries later became interested in North America including La Florida. The Bahamas’ closeness to the American south made them important lands to own or control. European countries went to war with Spain to control some of the new land. The British managed to take the Bahamas away from Spain. These islands were formally annexed to the eight Lord Proprietors of Carolina in 1629.

Because the Lord Proprietors and the governors they appointed were not really interested in the islands, pirates (privateers) began to have influence and control activities in the Bahamas and other islands.

In 1718, King George appointed a reformed pirate, Woodes Rogers, as Governor in Chief of the islands. Rogers reorganized the government, won the support of the local people and employed the pirates to protect the islands and plunder Spanish ships.

Some of the more famous pirates based in Nassau were the “lady” pirates, Mary Read and Anne Bonney. Among the men were “Calico Jack” Rackham, Stede Bonnet, Benjamin Hornigold, Charles Vane, and Edward Teach, also called Blackbeard.

Slowly, some order was restored to the Bahamas and they supplied the American Colonies with salt, whale oil, turtles and turtle shells, fruits in season, dye woods, wine, gums, and timber.

In the early 1700s the threat of war with England caused many people living in the colonies who wanted to stay part of England to move to the islands. These British supporters were called “Loyalists”. Because the Bahamas sided with the British, some southern planters, including many from eastern North Carolina, took their slaves and moved to the islands. (It is possible for students to research the Lord Proprietors and discover which

ones moved to the Bahamas and what became of their Carolina lands). The British gave the Loyalists land for plantations.

The abuses of slavery were most severe on the large sugar plantations of the Greater Antilles. Though these plantations existed on the larger islands, most plantations on the smaller “out islands” were cotton plantations barely producing enough for their own survival.

OTHER CAROLINA CONNECTIONS

Three large buildings were completed in Nassau, the capitol of the Bahamas, in 1816. They house the treasury, government offices, the courts, post office, the governor’s council, and the House of Assembly. This complex design is said to be based on “Governor Tryon’s winged palace in New Bern, North Carolina,” once called the most beautiful building in Colonial America.

Mr. John White, leader of the “Lost Colony” of Carolina and the only illustrator of NC Native Americans, sailed in the Bahamas and painted pictures of animals, birds, plants, and other creatures found on the islands. Some of his water colors are used to illustrate parts of this exhibit.

WHY IS THIS KIT IMPORTANT?

1. Guanahani (San Salvador) was the first place Columbus visited in the New World. This initial interaction opened the door to colonial conquest throughout the Americas and as a result, is important to the study of the Latin American conquest. Study of this area provides students with a foundation for later examination of the Latin American experience and will enable them to draw parallels.
2. In its early history, the Caribbean was isolated from the Europeans. However, once the Europeans saw its potential, the Caribbean became a strategic location. It facilitated the trade of humans and goods between the Americas, Europe, and Africa.
3. The Spanish went to Africa for slave labor after the native population was eliminated. The Africans were brought to the Caribbean. The part of the Caribbean focused upon in this kit has ties to the southeastern United States because Africans were brought from the Caribbean to the United States. Thus, this area plays an important part in American history.

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