Brief History of Native Americans

Stories of the first inhabitants of the continent
Native North America

- In 1500, before European contact, population was about 7 to 10 mill.
- There were over 600 tribes and societies
- Over 500 native languages are spoken at this time
Regions and Major Tribes
How do they say they got here?

• Creator or womb of Mother Earth?
• Heroic twins?
• Aquatic creatures create Earth?
• Ascension through 4 or 5 worlds?
• Scattered body parts of a giant?
• The common threads...they all have an element of animal and spiritual assistants aiding in creation
The beginnings...
What does science say?

• The land bridge...
• Earliest evidence is from 50,000 years ago
• Native American reactions...
By 1000 A.D. ...

- Complex societies developed across the land
- Resources of the areas helped them to survive...
  - Northwest
  - Southwest
  - Arctic
  - Forests
Natural Spirituality

- Central to their being
- Commune with elders, community, spirits and animals
- Give thanks for harvests, safety and hunts
- Some examples...
Plains Tribes Burials
Ceremonial dancers
Dance Like and Eagle
The Sacred Earth Lodge
Crow Tobacco Society

Tobacco was traditionally planted, cared for, and harvested by members of the society.
Blackfeet women
Ponca Dance to the Sun
Black Elk Speaks...

“You have noticed that everything an Indian does is in a circle, and that is because the Power of the World always works in circles, and everything tries to be round.”
Native Tribes in Focus
Pueblo Peoples...

- Begin forming around AD 800
- They were gifted potters, adobe apartment builders, and agriculturalists
League of the Iroquois
The Blackfeet
The Spirit World
What is Native American Spirituality?

- Drumming circles
- Medicine Healers/Shamans
- Rain Dances/Sun Dances
- Ancestors/Blood Spirituality
- Animism
- Vision Quests
- Seeing the Sacred in Everything!!!
"Rather than going to church, I attend a sweat lodge; rather than accepting bread and toast from the Holy Priest, I smoke a ceremonial pipe to come into Communion with the Great Spirit; and rather than kneeling with my hands placed together in prayer, I let sweetgrass be feathered over my entire being for spiritual cleansing and allow the smoke to carry my prayers into the heavens. I am a Mi'kmaq, and this is how we pray." Noah Augustine
"If you take [a copy of] the Christian Bible and put it out in the wind and the rain, soon the paper on which the words are printed will disintegrate and the words will be gone. Our bible IS the wind."

Statement by an anonymous Native woman.