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Presentation : Native Americans

**Who are Native Americans ?** Many nations, each having its own languages, traditions, beliefs, and social structures. Before 1492, there were between 500 and 600 distinct tribes.

1. **Native Americans' culture before colonization**

Different ways of life, cultures :

→ Southwest tribes, like the Hopis and the Navajos, inhabited desert regions. Cultivation of maize, beans, and squash adapted to the desert climate, supported by irrigation techniques developed by the tribes.

→ Social organization : matrilineal societies based on maternal line for leading whereas tribal councils composed of elders in others tribes

1. **The consequences of the arrival of the colonists**

→ **Decrease in population:** Deadly diseases, primarily spread through contact with domesticated animals, decimated up to 90% of the population in certain indigenous tribes, due to their vulnerability to diseases they had never been exposed to.

→ **Indigenous slave trade:** Europeans and indigenous tribes began enslaving other tribes to extract gold and cultivate tobacco.

→ **Alteration of indigenous culture / assimilation :** Christianity was forcibly imposed in non-reservation boarding schools. Americanization efforts included forced haircuts, wearing European clothing, and the prohibition of the indigenous language.

→ Contemporary situation of indigenous peoples: Between **4 and 7 million Native Americans** live in the United States(significant concentration in California and New York City).

→ Socio-economic issues: A **poverty rate of approximately 25%**, but recent initiatives aim to improve relations between the U.S. government and indigenous nations.

1. **Native Americans today**

**→ Residential Distribution:** Nearly half of Native Americans live in urban and rural areas, while the other half reside on federal reservations like near the Mississippi River for traditions

**→ Social Challenges:** Native Americans face various social issues : unemployment, poverty, alcoholism, drug abuse, diabetes, and heart disease.

**→ Integration and Historical Context:** Agencies work to **integrate Western medicine with tribal traditions**. Full US citizenship only in 1924 and federally-recognized tribes have rights to self-governance, enforce laws, tax, and regulate activities.

**→ Sovereignty Concerns and Advocacy:** Peoples argue that the **US government's recognition of Native American sovereignty is insufficient.** Calls for equal treatment, treating Native American matters through the Secretary of State.