



Native People of the Everglades

Early Native Americans

The indigenous people of the Everglades region are thought to have arrived in the Florida peninsula approximately 14,000 to 15,000 years ago. The ecosystems at that time were dry (arid) landscapes that supported plants and animals adapted to prairie and xeric scrub conditions. These early tribes are known as the Archaic peoples.

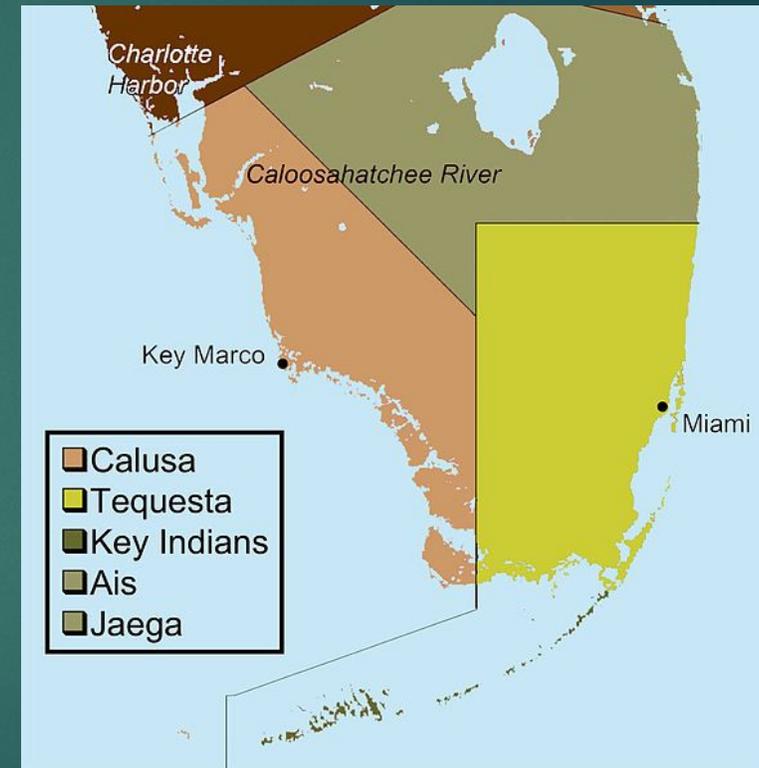
Approximately 5,000 years ago, the climate shifted to cause the regular flooding and sheet flow southward from Lake Okeechobee that created historic Everglades ecosystems.



Tequesta and Calusa

From these early tribes, the Calusa and the Tequesta tribes emerged. The Calusa, on the southwest coast of Florida, were more powerful in number and had a complex political structure. They were primarily hunter-gatherers, existing on small game, fish, turtles, alligators, shellfish, and various plants.

The Tequesta were primarily on Florida's southeast coast.



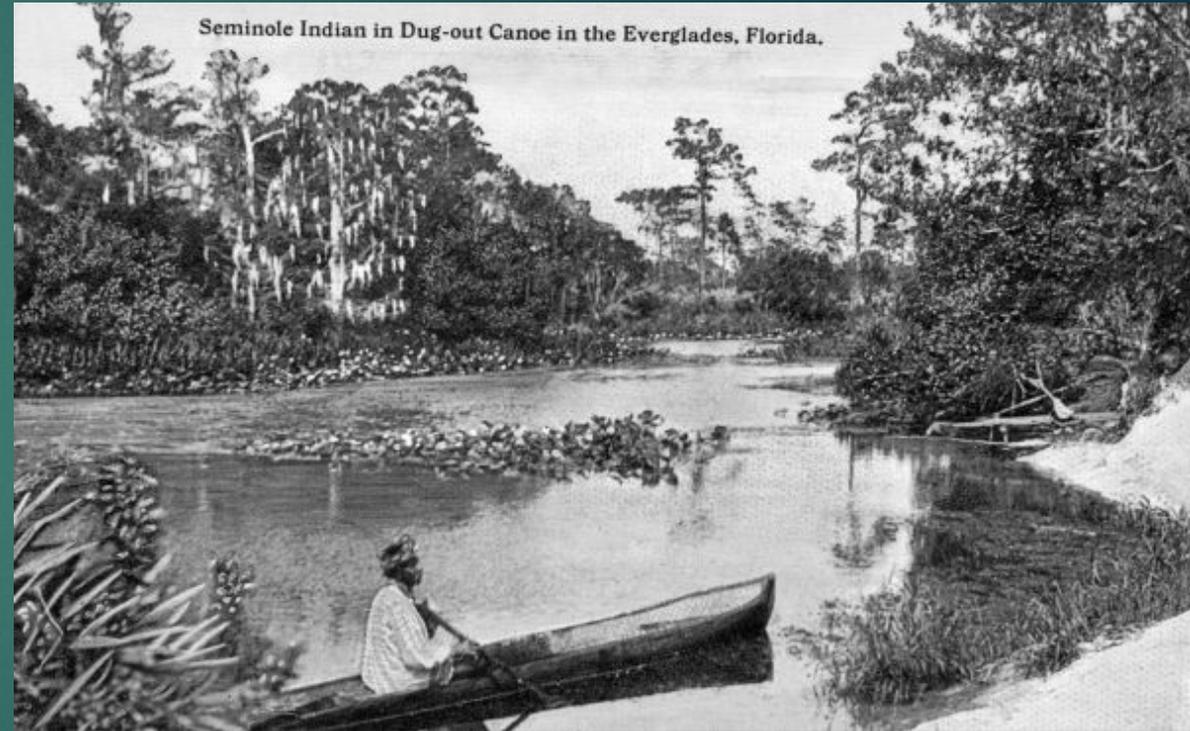
Ponce de Leon (1513 - 1521)



The Seminoles

In the mid 1700's the Seminole nation formed in northern Florida when a band of Creek Indians from lower Alabama and Georgia consolidated to become a distinct tribe. They also were joined by members of the Yuchis and Yamasses tribes, and later, by free blacks and escaped slaves.

Between 1740 and 1812 at least six distinct Seminole villages were established in northern Florida. They established good terms with the British and Spanish colonies, and set up thriving trade agreements.



Seminole Indian in Dug-out Canoe in the Everglades, Florida.

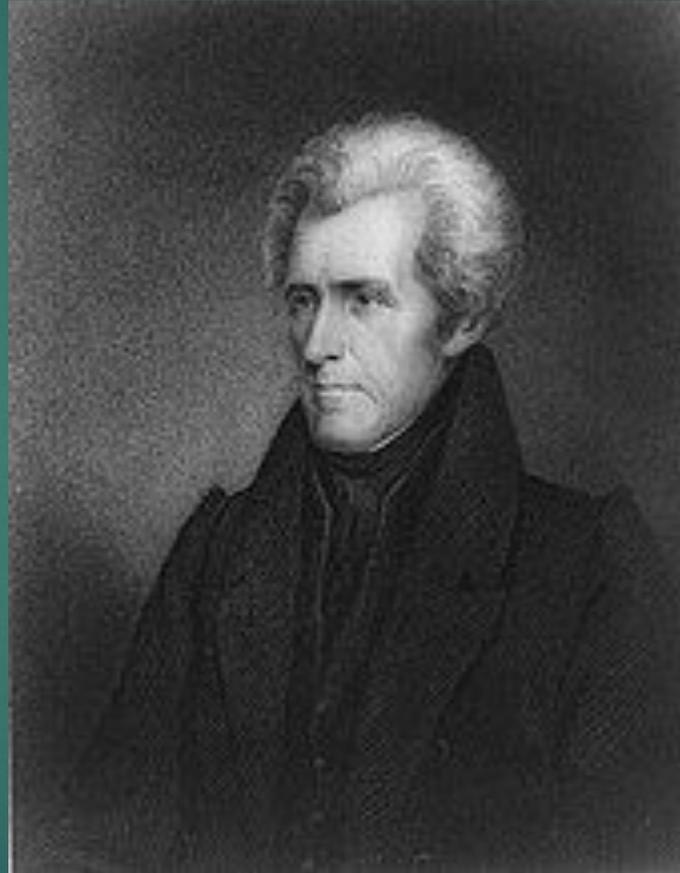
Seminole-Indian Wars

Between 1817 and 1858 a series of conflicts with the US government escalated into three wars against the United States, known as the Seminole-Indian Wars. Future U.S. President Andrew Jackson invaded then-Spanish Florida, attacked several key locations, and pushed the Seminoles farther south.



Indian Removal Act

In 1830, President Andrew Jackson signed the Indian Removal Act, which forcibly relocated native people in the Southern United States, including the Cherokee in Tennessee and North Carolina and the Seminoles in Florida. They were to be relocated to reservations west of the Mississippi in exchange for their lands. The Seminoles resisted, which set off the second of the Seminole-Indian Wars.



Trail of Tears

Between 1830 and 1858, more than 3,000 Seminoles were moved to reservations west of the Mississippi River, in what is now known as *The Trail of Tears*.

Roughly 200 to 300 Seminoles, who refused to surrender under any conditions, remained in Florida by hiding in the Everglades.



The Florida Land Boom

The first attempt to drain the Everglades was made by real estate developer Hamilton Disston in 1881. Disston's sponsored canals were largely unsuccessful, but the land he purchased for them stimulated economic and population growth that attracted railway developer Henry Flagler. During his 1904 campaign to be elected governor, Napoleon Bonaparte Broward promised to drain the Everglades, and his later projects were more effective than Disston's.

For the next 40 years, the natural Everglades watershed was “ditched, drained, dyked, and diverted” to make way for agriculture and land development. The Florida Land Boom peaked in the early 1920's, and then declined quickly as stories of scams began to surface.

Friends of the Seminoles

In 1899, a organization known as Friends of the Seminoles was formed in order to advocate for improved conditions for the Seminoles.

One of the most dedicated members was Minnie Moore-Willson, who was instrumental in having land legally set aside for Seminole Indians in the Everglades. She wrote several articles bringing attention to the plight of the Seminoles.



Seminoles and the Boom/Bust

As the demand for land increased in the boom, the Seminoles were pushed farther and farther into the Everglades. The man-made changes to the watershed resulted in changes to the ecosystems that they relied on for food, shelter and trade.

After the crash, the Seminoles found themselves increasingly in competition with the white men for hunting and the selling of furs and leather. The Seminoles were committed to using traditional methods, such as bow and arrow and dug-out canoes for transport, which put them at a disadvantage.

Post-1920's Florida

TAKES DECADES TO RECOVER FROM THE LAND BUST!!

SEMINOLES:

- MORE PUBLIC RECOGNITION AND SUPPORT OF SEMINOLE LAND
- SEMINOLES EMBRACE LAND SET ASIDE FOR THEM BY STATE GOVERNMENT
- FEDERAL GOVERNMENT SETS UP RESERVATIONS WITH MORE FAVORABLE LAWS

ECOLOGY:

- PRESERVATION (E.G. ESTABLISHMENT OF EVERGLADES NATIONAL PARK)
- CONSERVATION (E.G. LEGALLY PROTECTING EVERGLADES FLORA AND FAUNA)
- RESTORATION (E.G. COMPREHENSIVE EVERGLADES RESTORATION PLAN)

AFTER WWII, DEVELOPMENT EXPLODES AGAIN BUT WITH A NEW MINDSET