

The nature of native american history essay

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The nature of Native American economies prior to European colonization was a mixture of agricultural gathering, game hunting, and fishing. Some of the early tribal groups, explains (Gary Nash, 13) were touched by an agricultural revolution, allowing semi-fixed settlements and opening up trading networks. These trading networks of the early tribal communities can be seen as a form of economic activity. Much of the crafts developed by the early tribal groups included hand crafted pottery, basket weaving, and blankets. These crafts were used in the different trading networks created by the tribal communities. Much of the economic activity of the early tribal groups involved trading. Vast areas included different tribes and languages, were united through this ability of trade with one another. Many tribes shared different characteristics, however the biggest difference from tribe to tribe was the unique ability to master their local habitat to sustain life and continue their people's population of that area. The Native Americans had a significant impact to the early European colonization's. Following the colonization of Jamestown, John Smith wasn't convinced that the Native Americans wanted the colonies to survive. Instead, after his capture, Smith sought to extort agricultural goods that the colony needed. Smith recognized that the colony couldn't sustain itself, so he proceeded to force trade with the Native Americans to get the food and supplies his colony needed. The Native Americans did all they could not to help the colonies and sought to just let them starve. This impact from the Native Americans caused the colonies to raid their villages and eventually inhabit their land. The colonies continued their militaristic stance towards the Indians, causing the colonies to increase their weapons. The early colonies economic expansion was due

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to this militaristic policy which gave them land, food, and supplies to increase the support for the colonies. The nature of the colonial labor force in the US evolved over time. It began with early manufacturing, which served as a median of exchange between the agricultural colonies and the external world. This labor force of manufacturers used the technology of time including water power, handwork, and animal power. Manufacturing found its way throughout the colonies because it not only supplied a means of trade but provided supplies for local needs as well. As the colonies evolved (Hughes and Cain, 29), they focused on primary production which eventually employed nine-tenths of the colonial population. This production included all the major occupations of agriculture, fishing, mining, and timbering. The colonies eventually began to partake in regional specialization determined by their opportunity cost. New England didn't have a good quality of farm land, so many focused on timbering, their comparative advantage. The middle colonies had a much greater quality of farm land and a greater quantity; therefore they focused on many agricultural needs including wheat. Eventually the middle colonies became known for family farming and the raising of livestock. Finally the labor force in the south was primarily concerned with plantation agriculture which is where their comparative advantage was. With a high quality of land and raw materials these plantations saw the biggest increase in slave labor. With a large labor force of mostly slaves, the south was self sufficient in food supplies and animals which led to the ability of a rich export trade of tobacco and rice. The most important kinds of work arrangements in the colonial US was indentured servitude eventually evolving into slavery. Through indentured servants a labor force of immigrants began to emerge in the colonies. This labor force

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helped grow the colonial economies through higher production and increased exports. As more immigrants began to come to the colonies freely, the slave trade, especially in the south, began to rise. As the rich agricultural lands of the south needed constant upkeep, slave labor became vital for the south and helped increase its exports of tobacco and other cash crops. The American colonists were not economically exploited by the British prior to the American Revolution. Britain spent a fortune to defend the "profit-seeking" colonists from the Native Americans, French, and Spanish. The colonists wanted to continue to expand, which under the rule of Britain cost a lot of money in not only supplies but military power. The continued expansion west needed military support for the defense against Native Americans but also the French and Spanish because they had already claimed that land. Britain also subsidized the production of many US goods. These subsidies were expensive and most of weight fell on the British. Following the French-Indian War the British were in a crunch and owed a lot of money, they sought to increase the taxes of the colonies. This tax increase was fair because the war was fought for the colonies and in the US. These taxes seemed unfair to the colonists, however these colonies began to fulfill a mercantilist role which allowed them an increase in wealth and revenues. The colonies began to generate export earnings outside the empire and eliminate imports through the development of a market for domestic goods. The standard of living was also higher in the colonial US, which is clear through the average heights of military recruits. British recruits averaged 5 feet 6 inches while the colonial recruits averaged 5 feet 8 inches. For Britain it was expensive to continually support the colonies, after all the wars with the Indians, French, and Spanish followed the ever

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growing expansion, the colonies needed to share a portion of the cost. Britain tried to increase taxes, which were still significantly lower than in Britain, but the colonies revolted and led to the revolution. Britain was fair with their tax increases and in no way were economically exploiting the colonies.