

Anticipation Guide—Key

5.1.1
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Statement	Background Information
<p>People have lived in North America for many thousands of years.</p>	<p><i>This statement is supported by archaeological evidence (e.g., tools, bones, petroglyphs...) as well as by oral tradition. Oral tradition does not attempt to date events sequentially as it focuses on the cyclical patterns of time (e.g., seasons, floods, animal migrations...). However, oral stories depict the First Peoples as having been in this land from its beginning.</i></p>
<p>The first people in North America were ancestors of today's First Nations peoples.</p>	<p><i>Oral tradition supports this idea. Archaeological evidence supports it as well, offering no evidence of the presence of non-Aboriginal people until ca 1000 at l'Anse aux Meadows.</i></p>
<p>During several periods of time long ago, called the Ice Ages, most of North America was covered in ice.</p>	<p><i>Geological evidence suggests that there were several long periods of glaciation during the Pleistocene epoch, which stretches back two million years. It is believed that the Beringia land bridge, exposed due to lowered sea levels, remained unglaciated during this period because of its arid climate. The most recent ice age appears to have reached its peak about 20 000 BCE. As the glaciers began to melt, they shaped the landscape and created passable corridors allowing migration southward. Oral tradition refers to great flooding of the land, which may refer to this long and gradual period of the ending of the ice age.</i></p>
<p>First Nations peoples have different stories about how they came to be in North America.</p>	<p><i>The First Peoples of all regions of North America have stories of their origins on this continent. According to oral tradition, their ancestors have been here as long as the land has existed (which some stories name Turtle Island). There are variations in the stories depending upon the culture and the region from which they came, but there are also many similarities. Because today's established international boundaries did not yet exist, some of these similarities extend to the stories of indigenous peoples of the southern United States.</i></p>
<p>Scientists can tell exactly when the first human beings lived on North American soil.</p>	<p><i>This is impossible to tell with precision. There is evidence of the presence of big game hunters as early as 35 000 years ago; and solid evidence of human life in Alaska and Yukon 20 000 to 25 000 years ago (Old Crow Flats, Bluefish Caves).</i></p>
<p>Oral tradition includes stories that contain valuable information about history.</p>	<p><i>These legends explain the presence of human beings and depict their relationship to the territory, the animals and the vegetation. They describe the origins of cultural practices and some stories refer to natural events and phenomena such as floods.</i></p>
<p>There is definite scientific evidence to prove that human beings came to North America over an exposed land bridge over today's Bering Strait.</p>	<p><i>There is no definitive proof of this theory, although there is fossil evidence to suggest that large mammals of similar types roamed the northern areas of Asia and North America during the Pleistocene era of glaciation. Evidence of tools related to big game hunting has led scientists to believe that human beings followed the large mammals as they migrated.</i></p>