



Encyclopedia of American Indian Contributions to the World: 15,000 Years of Inventions and Innovations (Facts on File Library of American History)

By Emory Dean Keoke, Kay Marie Porterfield



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Encyclopedia of American Indian Contributions to the World is a unique A-to-Z reference to the vast offerings made by American Indians throughout history. More than 450 entries provide a panorama of little-known information about the rich inventiveness of indigenous peoples of North, Central, and South America. To be included in the book, the item must have originated in one of those three regions, have been used by Indian people, and have been adopted in some way by other cultures. While many of those contributions can clearly be shown to have been first invented or used by Indians, some entries cover inventions that were made independently by others as well. In these cases, the unique features of the American Indian science or technology are covered and compared to the other version of the item or process. Entries include: Trousers (25,000 B.C.); Agriculture (8000-7000 B.C.); Adobe (3000 B.C.); Tax system (2000 B.C.); Urban planning (1700 B.C.); Geometry (1200 B.C.); Scalpels (1000 B.C.); Sports helmets (300 B.C.); Electricity (200 B.C.-A.D. 600); Zoned biodiversity (A.D. 595); Cigars (A.D. 1000); Aroma therapy (A.D. 1100-1519); Hydraulics (A.D. 1300); Thanksgiving (A.D. 1621); Appaloosa horse breed (A.D. 1710); Diabetes medication (A.D. 1928).



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Editorial Review

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More than 450 inventions and innovations that can be traced to indigenous peoples of North, Middle, and South America are described in this wonderful encyclopedia. Criteria for selection are that the item or concept must have originated in the Americas, it must have been used by the indigenous people, and it must have been adopted in some way by other cultures. Some of the innovations may have been independently developed in other parts of the world (geometry, for example, was developed in ancient China, Greece, and the Middle East as well as in the Americas) but still fit all three criteria. The period of time covered is 25,000 B.C. to the twentieth century. Among the entries are *Adobe*, *Agriculture*, *Appaloosa horse breed*, *Chocolate*, *Cigars*, *Diabetes medication*, *Freeze-drying*, *Hydraulics*, *Trousers*, *Urban planning*, and *Zoned biodiversity*. Readers will find much of the content revealing. The authors note that the Moche "invented the electrochemical production of electricity" although they used it only for electroplating, a process they developed "more than a thousand years" before the Europeans, who generally get the credit. The Aztec medical system was far more comprehensive than anything available in Europe at the time of contact.

The entries are in alphabetical order. Most are anywhere from one paragraph to a column in length, though some (*Stonemasonry techniques*, *Pharmacology*, *Road systems*) cover a page or more. Each entry includes the date and area of origination and has a short bibliography of secondary resources at the end. The cross-references appear in capital letters within an entry or as *see also* references at the end. The introduction has cross-references in it as well. Some of the entries include black-and-white illustrations or photographs. The only critical item missing from most entries is a pronunciation guide.

The end matter includes two appendixes: "Tribes Organized by Culture Area" and a selection of maps. These are followed by a glossary (of mostly medical terms used in many entries but again with no pronunciation guides), a chronology, and a bibliography (with a few Internet sites). There are several indexes: "Entries by Tribe, Group, or Linguistic Group"; "Entries by Geographical Culture Area"; a subject index; and a general index.

This is a well-written book with fascinating information and wonderful pictures. It should be in every public, school, and academic library for its depth of research and amazing wealth of knowledge. *RBB*
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Users Review

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Cathy Spearman:

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Samuel Potter:

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