



Indigenous People and How They Lived

People were living in the greater San Antonio region roughly 12,000 years ago. Nomadic people moved around throughout the year and did not accumulate midden piles of refuse the same way as sedentary groups. Several finds here in San Antonio have shown that more permanent settlements occurred around 8,800-350 years ago.

Evidence of humans

Spears and darts are the early signs of humans. They were hunter/gatherers hunting large mammals such as mastodons. We find cemeteries about 3000 years ago. Ceramics and bows and arrows are found from 1200 years ago. Early people camped along Salado Creek and used the San Antonio River as an important travel artery.



How were rocks and stones used?

Indigenous people used rocks to make tools. Flat rocks made a mortar and pestle to grind grain. The grain was rolled into dough on long flat rocks. Heavy rocks were used as blunt instruments.



The particular importance of chert

- Some rocks made arrowheads and spear points. Native Americans came to the Hill Country because of the special stone called Edwards Chert, or flint. Some native people came for miles to collect it.
- Arrow and dart points, scrapers, knives made of Edwards Chert lasted a long time and were easy to repair. The Spanish called this stone pedernales, meaning flint and the Pedernales River is named after it



The importance of the river for Indigenous People.

The plentiful resources along the San Antonio River attracted settlers. The river was also a travel artery for canoes. When members of the Lipan Apache, Comanche, and Tonkawa tribes journeyed through the region they camped along Salado Creek, which runs through Phil Hardberger Park.



What did Indigenous People hunt and fish?

Native Americans hunted deer and turkey in the hills for thousands of years. They dug up mussels and fished in the clear streams.



Ethnobotany is the study of cultural uses of plants.

Many of the plants we see in the park were used by Indigenous People for food, fiber, soap, insect repellent, building materials, and medicine.



Plants uses are divided into categories.

- Edible plants were eaten by early settlers.
- Medicinal plants were used to treatment injuries and illnesses.
- Utilitarian plants were used to make things.



Early nomads and settlers used plants in their menus.

Some examples are: Agarita, Agave, Amaranth, Bumelia, Cattail, Dayflower, Devil's Claw, Dewberry, Elderberry, Escarpment cherry, Evergreen sumac, Greenbrier, Hackberry, Honey mesquite, Mulberry, Oak, Pecan, Prickly pear, Sotol, Texas persimmon, Tomatillo, and Turk's cap.

Live Oak acorns were ground for flour. Honey Mesquite beans made wine and jelly, and the pods were also be ground for flour. Agarita berries made wine and jelly,. They ate prickly pear tunas and pads. They ate young Greenbrier tips. They made jelly and bread from persimmon fruit and gum from the Gum bumelia tree. The roots of Yucca and Sotol made flour.



They used plants to treat injuries and illnesses.

Some examples are: Agarita, Dewberry, Elderberry, Honey mesquite, Prairie sumac, Prickly pear, Texas persimmon, Turk's cap, Senna, Toothache tree, Wafer ash hoptree, and Yucca.

They made a poultice out of pads and tunas, and a toothache numbing rub from the Toothache tree. Senna was used for intestine problems.



They made things out of plants.

Some examples are: Agarita, Agave, Bumelia, Ashe juniper, Honey mesquite, Prickly pear, Sotol, and Yucca.

Oak gall was used for dyes and ink. Ashe Juniper wood was used for fences and floors and the berries for insect repellent and soap. Agarita wood made a yellow dye. They made soap and fiber from Yucca. They used Sotol to make rope, sandals, and walking sticks.





Other examples:

- Senna was used as a laxative.
- Cochineal was used as a dye.

You can sing the *Using Plants* song to the tune of *Jingle Bells*.

Using plants, using plants, using
in the past.

Some for lunch and some for
illness,

And making things that last!

Repeat 2 times.



Be an Indigenous People detective!

Take a walk through the park
and find plants and animals
early people might have used.



Can you sort the plants into the possible uses?

Plants to sort:

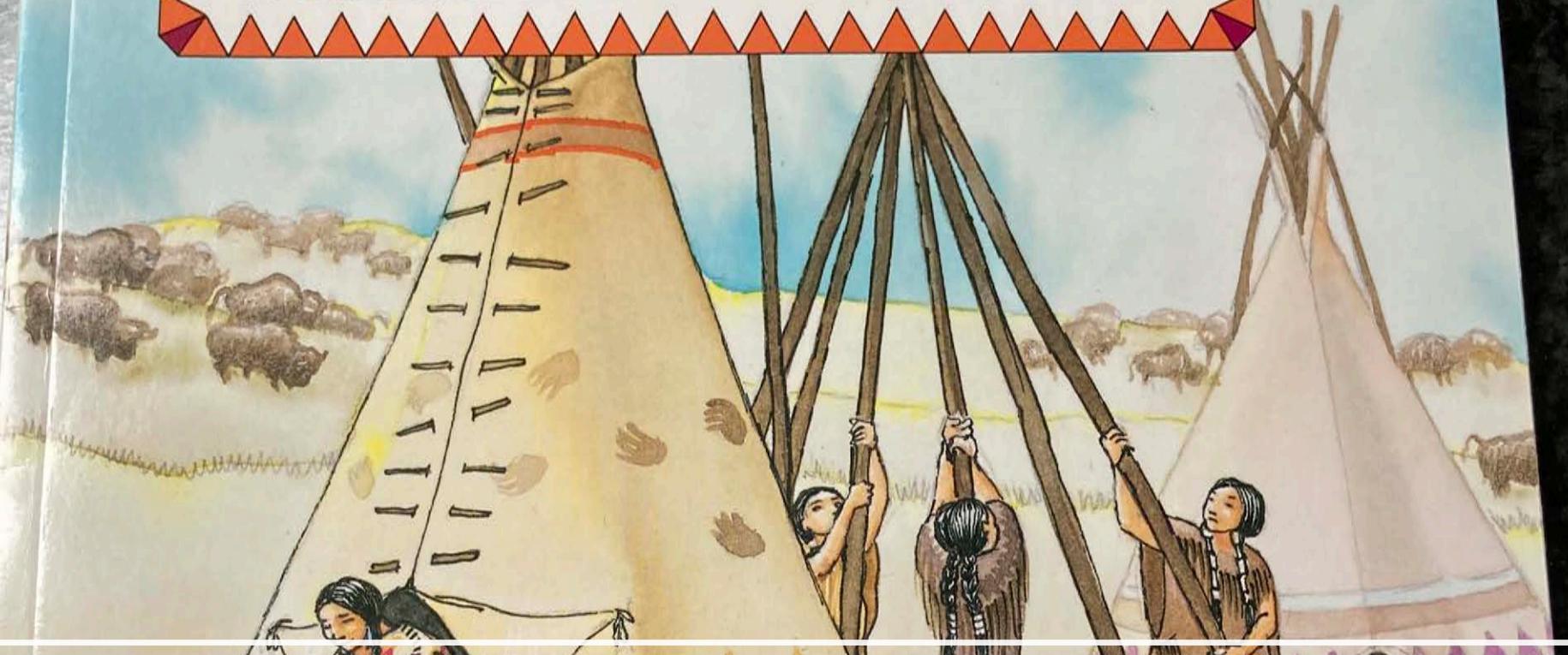


Sorting chart:

Category	Edible	Medicine	Make things

THE • VERY • FIRST AMERICANS

by Cara Ashrose ♦ illustrated by Bryna Waldman



You can learn more about early inhabitants.

