



Our Ancestors did not cultivate the earth for producing food. Whatever we needed, the earth provided for us. We never took more than what we needed. We didn't waste anything, and we used all that we took. For example, if we harvested a deer we would use not only the meat, but many parts of the animal. We used the hide for clothing or blankets, the dewclaws for adornment, the bones for tools, etc.

We shared the earth with each other and with the animals. We gave thanks for everything that we took. If a person was gathering, they would leave an offering for the things taken. An offering might be feathers, shells, stones, etc. We revered every living thing. Nothing was ever killed if it was not needed and used. Plants and animals were considered our brothers and sisters and were treated with great respect.

Deer could be harvested any time of year, but many food items were seasonal. Berries, for example, were ripe in the summer. Families would travel to the areas known for berries and would gather them. Whatever berries were not eaten right away, were dried and stored for other times of the year when berries were not available. Women and children harvested most of the plant foods and men did most of the hunting and fishing. Then all the people worked together to preserve the food for later use.



Everything we needed had to be handmade. We made our own clothes and tools and used plants and animals to make anything needed. Some plants had several uses. For example, we used the Cedar for making houses, canoes, tools and its bark for making hats and clothes. Bark was good for repelling rain so it was used for hats and clothing. Baskets and tools were made in the winter when we lived in our Plankhouse. In the summer we traveled to various places to gather food and plant materials.

In order to make sure that the harvest was good the following year, we knew that we needed to take care of our land. We did that by controlled burning of the land. Controlled burning would get rid of undergrowth and invasive plants which at the same time making the Native plants healthier and stronger for the next year.

Every day was Earth Day to our Ancestors.

**By: Kathy Cole**