

# Archaic Period

Throughout the Archaic Period, people began to change or adapt their tools and lifestyles to better match the environment. A shift in the climate towards warmer and drier conditions contributed to the extinction of some of the large game animals that people hunted during Paleo Indian times. As a result, Archaic peoples began to rely less on hunting and more on foraging for seasonally available plants. This meant that they had to use a wider range of habitats. So, instead of congregating around lakes as they did during Paleo Indian times, Archaic peoples would make use of ridge tops and smaller streams as often as larger rivers.

Archaeological sites from the Early Archaic Period are usually small and tend to consist of **fire hearths** as well as **charcoal and rock concentrations**. These sites are likely the result of small, mobile groups of people using areas for short periods of time. During the Early Archaic, people began notching their **projectile points** (commonly called arrowheads), probably as an aid in attaching the point to a wooden shaft.

By the Middle Archaic, modern day climatic and environmental conditions had been reached, and prehistoric peoples had adopted more efficient ways to exploit a wide range of plants and animals; again, people change their tools. For, example, archaeologists begin to find pitted (or nutting) stones, which may indicate an increase in the use of nuts and seeds. Other artifacts such as stones used to grind up wild grains and wood working tools are also found.

The appearance of large **storage pits** during the Late Archaic Period suggests that people were starting to live in semi-permanent base camps. Increasing amounts of squash, gourd, pigweed and sunflower remains indicate that Late Archaic peoples were practicing some form of horticulture in addition to hunting and gathering a variety of wild animals and plants. At sites from this period, archaeologists begin to find fragments of **bowls** made from soft rocks called steatite and soapstone-- some of the earliest evidence that prehistoric peoples were using vessels or containers.