

## NATIVE AMERICAN TIMELINE FOR LARIMER COUNTY, CO

From an archaeologist's perspective, the legacy of human presence in Northern Colorado exceeds more than 13,000 years of indigenous peoples living in, and migrating through, this unique eco-tone where the plains meet the mountains. Beginning at the end of the last Ice Age when extinct megafauna like mammoth and sabertooth tigers inhabited the area, these early Native peoples developed large fluted weaponry known as Clovis projectile points in order to survive.

They were followed by hunters who followed the migration routes of a now extinct species of bison, *bison antiquus*, more than 15 to 25% larger than today's bison. Dating back to more than 12,000 years ago, this era is known as the Folsom period and is evidenced in a world famous archaeological site, Lindenmeier, located just north of Fort Collins. Projectile points were found in 1924 by a local family of avocational archaeologists, the Coffins, on the ranch land of their friend, William Lindenmeier. This eventually became known as the Lindenmeier Archaeological Site and is considered significant because it contained evidence of people inhabiting the area, rather than just hunting and butchering bison. It continues to be the largest Folsom site of this type, with the largest quantity of artifacts in all of North America. Excavated by the Smithsonian Institution from 1934 to 1940, the site uncovered amazing tools as well as materials coming from long distances. The excavations also uncovered some of the very earliest beads from a variety of materials, bone tools used for sewing, and other decorative items. This site continues to be the largest kind of its type and is considered "the New York City" of Folsom sites.

From about 8,000 years ago, people hunted and gathered most of the animals and plants found today, with some minimal agricultural components. Tribal groups as we know them today are not recognized as being present until 1,000 A.D., if not longer, beginning with the Numic (Uto-Aztecan) speakers, commonly known as the Ute. Oral tradition and the ethno-historic record show evidence of other tribal groups like the Apache, Comanche, Arapaho, Cheyenne, Kiowa, Lakota, Shoshone, and Pawnee in Colorado as early as the mid-17<sup>th</sup> century.

Euroamericans began to enter the Plains after the 1803 Louisiana Purchase as government-sponsored explorers and private fur-trappers/traders. It was not until the 1850s when a federal government policy of westward expansion to stimulate agriculture, mining, and trade combined with several specific actions and events to draw Euroamericans to the Fort Collins area. These actions included:

- The Laramie Treaty of 1851 which established tribal boundaries, gave the United States the right to establish roads—specifically along the Platte River—and military posts in Indian country, and negotiated peace between warring Plains tribes.
- The Kansas-Nebraska Act of 1854 developed a legal mechanism for land title.
- Gold was discovered near Denver in 1858.
- Colona (near modern day Laporte) was established by Antoine Janis, his Lakota wife First Elk Woman, and other French-Canadians and Native wives in 1859 (Burriss 2006).

In 1868, the last of the Native Americans, Friday and his band of Arapahos, were removed to Wyoming, with the Federal government mandating by 1878 the removal of all Native people to designated reservations. Except for the Southern Ute Indian Tribe and the Ute Mountain Ute Tribe, all others were located outside of Colorado. Combined with other assimilation policies, conversion to Christianity, restriction to boarding schools, and the outlawing of most Native American ceremonies, there was a tremendous loss of cultural knowledge and traditions.

Today, the Native population of Northern Colorado may come from different tribes as they attend colleges and universities, work for the many corporate companies or government agencies, or just pass through, than those mentioned above – Navajo, Chumash, Crow, Potawatomi, Creek, Choctaw, and many more – the area of Fort Collins and the Cache la Poudre River continues to be a crossroads of diverse tribal peoples.

Recent research, both from a Western science point of view and an indigenous perspective, is starting to shed new ideas about the origins of the earliest inhabitants of North America and their relationship with Native peoples of today. Not only with archaeologists, but also within the disciplines of geoarchaeology, paleoclimatology, and microbiology, as well as with more interaction and partnering with Native peoples. It is a very exciting time and disciplines are having to rethink many theories that have long been held as absolutes.

**A Chronology of Native Americans in Northern Colorado (from an archaeological perspective with main cultural group/complexes based on tool types found in the archaeological record) (Burris 2006).**

| Stage/Period  | Date Range   | Main Cultural Group/Complexes  |
|---|--|--|
| <b>Paleoindian</b><br>Clovis<br>Folsom<br>Plano                           | <b>12,000 BC – 5500 BC</b><br>12,000 BC – 9750 BC<br>11,000 BC – 8700 BC<br>10,850 BC -5500 BC | Clovis<br>Folsom<br>Agate Basin, Hell Cap, Cody, Firstview, Kersey   |
| <b>Archaic</b><br>Early Archaic<br><br>Middle Archaic<br><br>Late Archaic | <b>5500 BC – AD 150</b><br>5500 BC – 3000 BC<br><br>3000 BC – 1000 BC<br><br>1000 BC – AD 150  | Mount Albion, Magic Mountain, Mountain Tradition<br>McKean, Magic Mountain - Apex<br>Magic Mountain - Apex |
| <b>Late Prehistoric</b><br>Early Ceramic<br>Middle Ceramic                | <b>AD 150 - 1540</b><br>AD 150 – 1150<br>AD 1150 -01540  | Woodland<br>Central Plains Tradition – Upper Republican, Intermountain Tradition                           |
| <b>Protohistoric</b>  | <b>AD 1540 - 1860</b>  | Ute, Apache, Comanche, Arapaho, Cheyenne, Kiowa, Shoshone, Lakota, Pawnee                                  |

Burris, Lucy  
 2003 *People of the Poudre; An Ethnohistory of the Cache la Poudre River National Heritage Area AD 1500-1880*. Fort Collins, CO: Cache la Poudre River National Heritage Area, Friends of the Poudre, and the Dept. of the Interior National Park Service.