

# The North American Indians

Before Columbus discovered America in 1492, the indigenous population of North America is estimated to have been around five million. The Europeans brought with them diseases previously unknown on the continent, including small pox. As part of their pre-ordained quest of colonisation, they took control of the Indians, destroying the delicate balance of their economy and traditions, often quite violently. The end result of this was that, while the white immigrant population grew from zero to 75 million by the end of the 18th Century, the native population had dwindled to a mere quarter of a million.

## THE MIGRATIONS

It has often been surmised that the Native Americans were descended from Asian settlers who emigrated across the Bering Strait during the Quaternary period. They were originally from North-East Siberia and came into contact with North American lands by passing through modern day Alaska, some 20,000 - 30,000 years ago, progressively moving inland.

It is believed that the first people to move towards the American continent carried their own tools with them from the mid to late Palaeolithic period and probably lived in quite small groups that survived by hunting and fishing, always migrating with the changing seasons, to take advantage of the best climatic conditions.



Bison skin painted with racing warriors from the North-Western Great Plains.

## THE ANCIENT NORTH AMERICAN SETTLERS

When the first contact took place between the European invaders and the inhabitants of the American continent, it is estimated that their population was some ninety million people, of which some five million lived in what is now the United States, the rest being divided between Canada, Mexico, Central America and the

Caribbean Islands.

Of course, these figures are highly debatable as it was impossible to undertake an exact census at the time. Also, by the time the Europeans began their first surveys of the indigenous populations, they had already been decimated by forced labour, famine, war and, above all, by the new diseases against which they had no natural defence.

## THE NORTH AMERICAN INDIANS

The new migrants spread gradually across the whole North American continent, adapting themselves and surviving in a terrain as large as it was diverse, inventing new hunting and fishing tactics, making new tools and taking advantage of the natural medicines that the land provided. This parallel development over thousands of square kilometres set the scene for the formation of various tribes, many of them breaking away from others, with their own customs and religious beliefs, making the job of speaking in general terms about the American Indians as we know them today almost impossible. The only thing the different tribes have in common is their nomadic origin, although each tribe later evolved according to the terrain in which they became established. In consequence, the commonly used generic term 'Indian Nation' is very misleading.

It was the invading white man who



The Indian's characteristic teepees or tipi. The term means 'living' in Lakota.

unified them under the term 'Indians' (not 'indigenous people', which would have been more fitting). He also defined them as savages, while he, in turn, destroyed their habitat and, paradoxically, introduced customs such as scalping for which the Indians were later so vilified, but never accepted responsibility for teaching them such a barbaric way of obtaining war trophies.

The indigenous people, divided among many diverse tribes, lived in harmony with nature and, in many cases, maintained a strong animosity with their neighbouring tribes, which kept their warrior spirit ever alive.

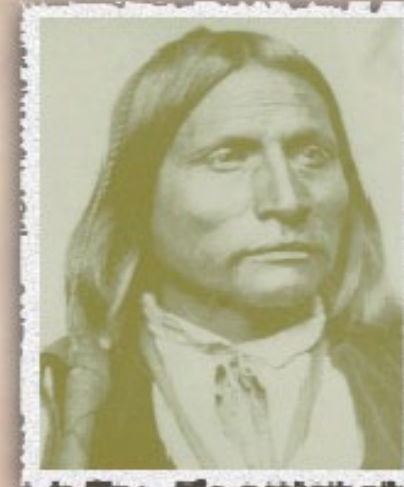
The American colonisers encountered first hand this fierce warrior



Red Cloud (around 1820 - 1909)  
Leader of the Oglala Sioux.



Little Wolf (1908).  
Lakotan warrior.



Big Bow.  
Kiowa chief.



Jack Red Cloud  
Son of the great Sioux chief.



Young Navaho  
warrior.



Goyahkla, better known as Geronimo.  
Chiricahua Apache leader (1884).

spirit when they invaded their lands with complete disregard for their way of life. Later, it was to be the United States Army whose members bore the brunt of the terror and hatred of these 'savages' who confronted them with nothing to gain and everything to lose.

Finally, the implacable will of the white man was imposed upon them. Of course, there were exceptions like the Navaho nation who, in recent years, have prospered and even increased the limits of their reserve through astute commercial deals. The remainder of the tribes were

doomed to extinction or confinement on reservations, where their independent way of life has been almost forgotten.



Crow shield.  
1850-1880.



Modifications carried out to the torso.



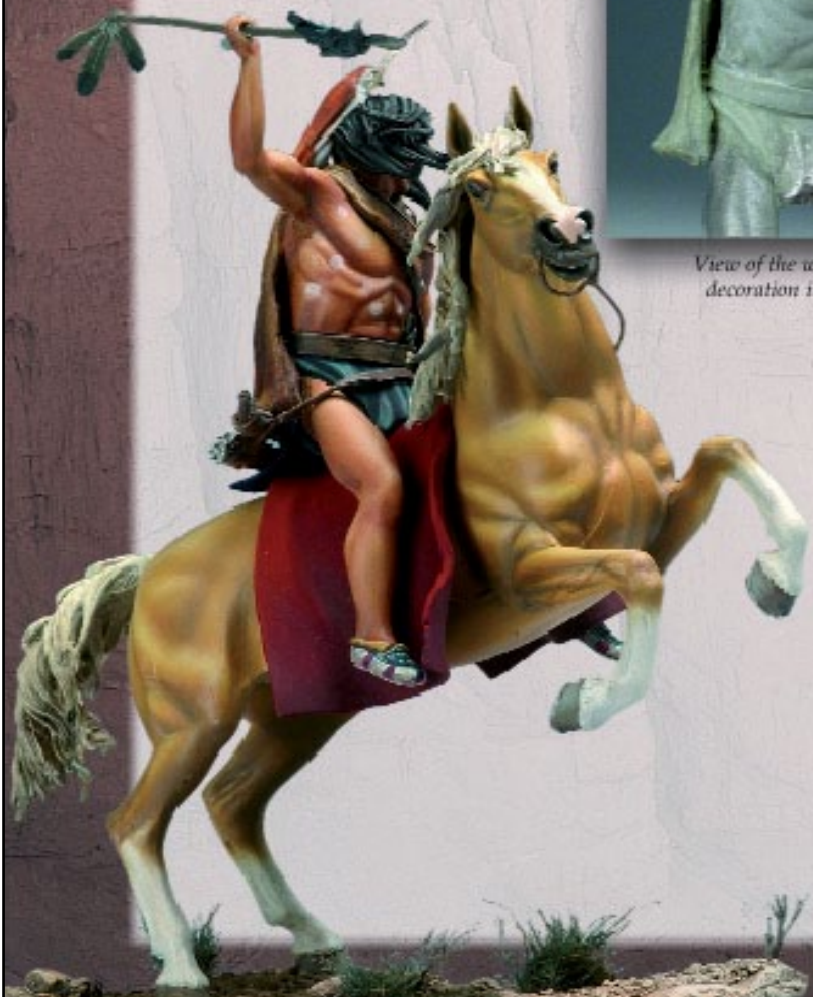
Hair in flight modelled from Duro.



View of the whole with the decoration in movement.



View of the war bonnet positioned on the figure.



Skin base colour applied with an airbrush.



First shadows applied using short strokes.



Second shadows using a slightly darker mixture.



Final highlights applied with an airbrush.



Painting the face and the paintbrush coat.



Shadows on the face and eyebrows.

### PAINTING THE CLOTHING

Texture is a feature not usually dealt with among the majority of miniature painters. By just going out into the street and observing the quality of different material surfaces, the multitude of finishes presented can be clearly seen. In this instance, a normal shirt will be painted, similar to that which can be found on almost any miniature, and suede trousers that present a much more marked texture. The different treatment of textures for each material is a way of providing more detail and realism to any miniature.

### PAINTING THE SHIRT

The shirt was painted in a toned-down pink, following the zenithal illumination scheme. In this case, in order to achieve a quick, efficient finish, the base colour was applied with an airbrush. The highlights were also done with the same tool. However, this was achieved by positioning the airbrush so that only that part of the shirt illuminated by the light would receive the paint. Once this was done, fine veils were applied with oils, a first coat over the whole surface and another thicker coat only on the shadowed areas. This is an extremely simple and quick method, especially appropriate for reasonably flat surfaces.



*The shirt base colour was a mixture of red and a little grey.*



*First highlights applied with an airbrush.*



*Final highlights applied after adding more white to the mixture.*



*First shadows applied with oil veils.*



*An almost black brown was used for the deepest shadows.*



*The highlights were finally reinforced with acrylics.*



### PAINTING THE TROUSERS

The trousers were begun in the same way as the shirt, by applying a dark base colour and first highlighting with the airbrush. For this, in the same way as previously undertaken for the shirt painting, the airbrush was positioned over the figure and spraying paint from the direction of the light source.

Once the highlights had been done, some areas were further illuminated using a paintbrush. However, instead of the usual method, gradient increases were lightly realised lightly, until a subtle texture was obtained.

As far as the shadows were concerned, they were applied in veils of medium-brown oil at the same time as the texture effect was continued,



*The base colour for the trousers was applied with an airbrush.*



*Highlights following the same technique as for the shirt.*



*Second highlights applied with a paintbrush.*



*Medium-brown shadows applied as oil veils.*



*The shadow areas were accentuated with darker veils.*



*More lively tones were applied to the highlights to achieve a greater contrast.*

softly marking the shadow areas. This effect was then reinforced by the application of shadows in the same way, carefully applying a darker colour. Then a series of veils were applied in dark browns to reinforce the shadows.

Once the shadows were done, the highlights were then accentuated, applying more lively tones in order to get a greater contrast. In this final step, the texture was re-worked, especially in the zones of greatest light and shadow intensity.

To complete the job, it only remained to paint some small marks and splashes so that the trousers would have a realistic green look.

