

The Timucua

The Timucua (tee-MOO-qua) settled in central and northeastern Florida. It is believed that the Timucua may have been the first Native Americans to see the Spanish explorers when they landed in Florida. Early explorers often used the language of the Timucua to communicate with other tribes.

Life in the Villages

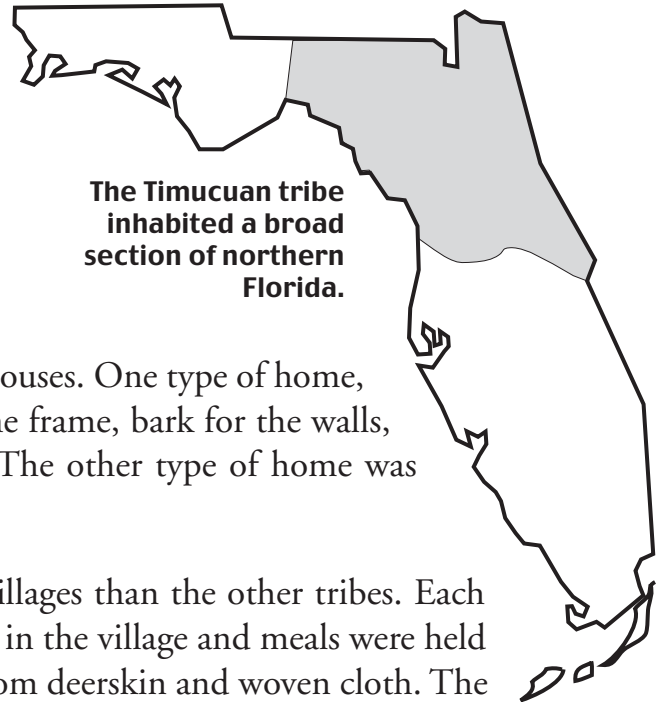
In Timucuan villages, there were usually two kinds of houses. One type of home, referred to as a long house, was built using poles for the frame, bark for the walls, and branches from palmetto palm trees for the roof. The other type of home was round and covered with leaves of palm trees.

The Timucua were known to have more permanent villages than the other tribes. Each family had their own home but the cooking took place in the village and meals were held daily in a central location. They wore clothing made from deerskin and woven cloth. The men wore their hair long with a topknot.

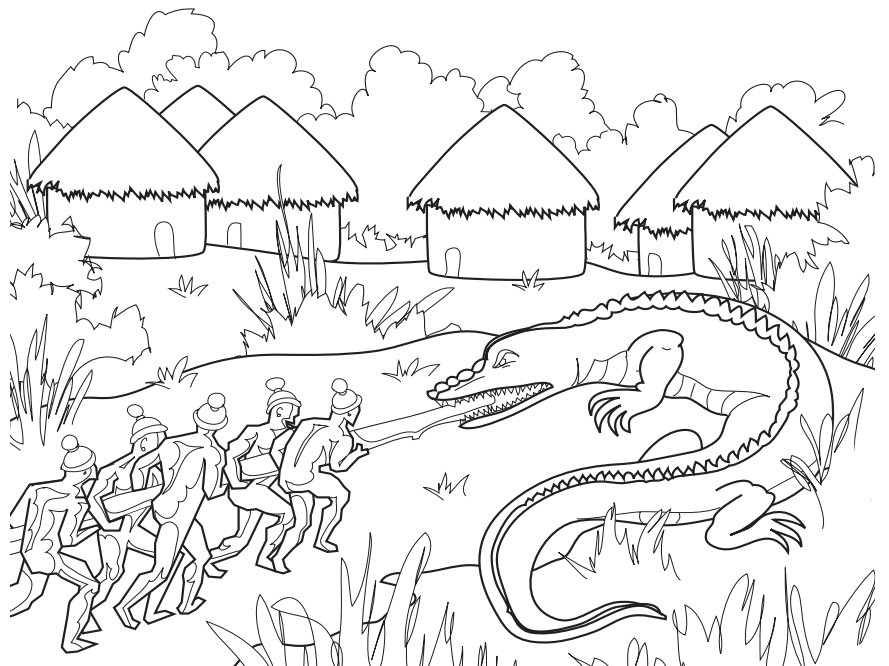
Timucua liked to hold ceremonies for planting, harvesting, and honoring leaders who died. A shaman, the religious leader of the tribe, conducted the ceremonies.

Hunting and Fishing

The Timucua, like other Native Americans, were skilled hunters and fishermen. The men made tools for hunting and fishing. They used spears, clubs, bows and arrows, and blowguns, to kill their game. Some of the game that they used for food included bears, deer, wild turkey, and alligators. They smoked the meat over open fires. The women would clean and prepare the animal hides and use them for clothing.



The Timucuan tribe inhabited a broad section of northern Florida.



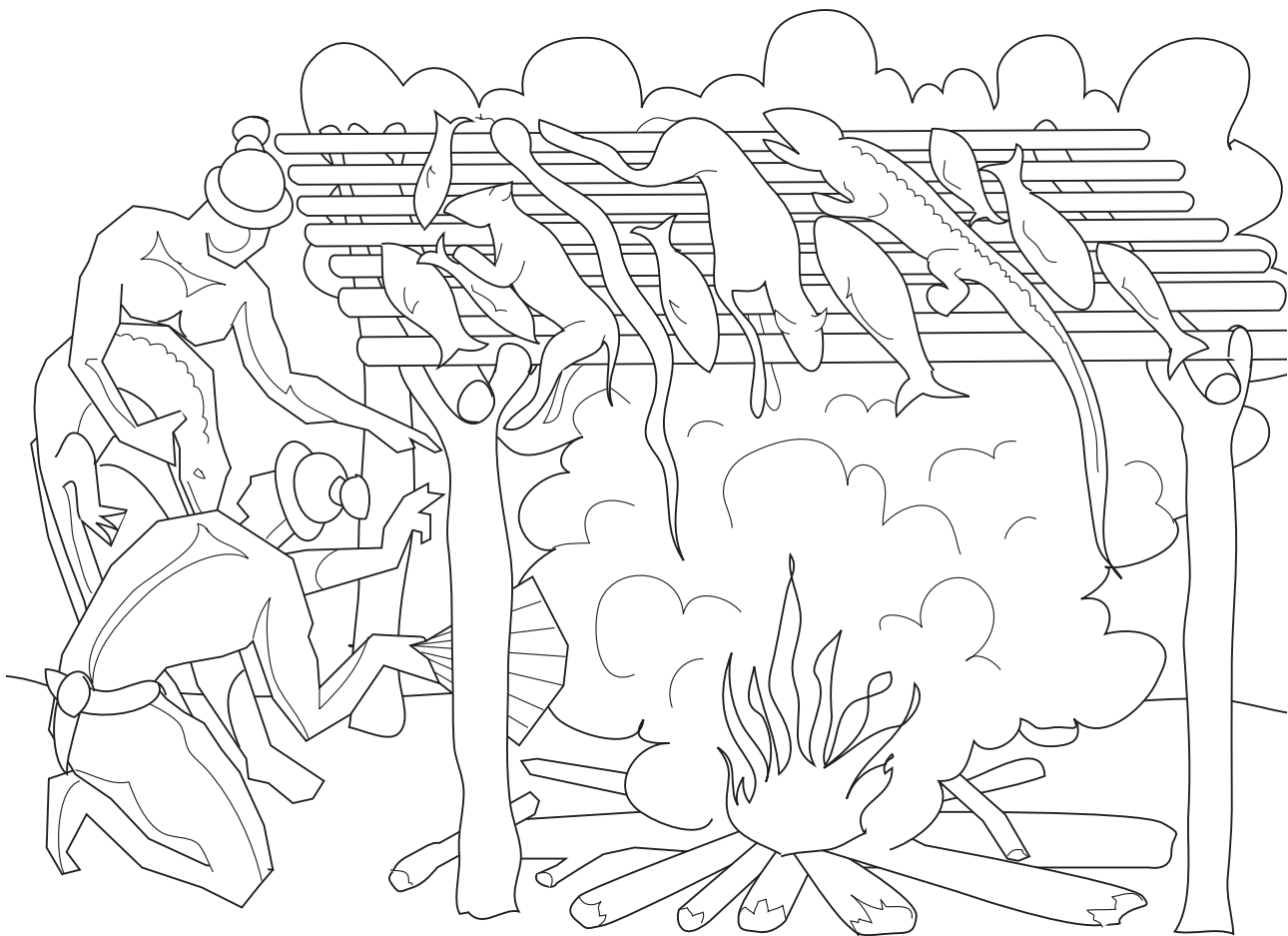
Timucuan men hunted alligators.

The men also caught fish, clams, and oysters for food. They used a fishing trap called a weir. This trap was a wood fence that stretched across a stream or river to catch fish. Once the fish swam over the fence in high tide, the weir caught them as the tide went out.

Farming was another important means of obtaining food for the Timucua. The main crops that they harvested were maize (corn), beans, squash, pumpkins, and melons. The women cooked the meals and gathered roots, nuts and wild berries to eat. The women also made pottery to use for cooking.

Fighting War and Disease

During the time period from 1649 through 1656, the population of the Timucuan tribe began to diminish. Although the Timucua were one of the more peaceful tribes, they would fight back when pushed. The war with the English and other Indians decreased their numbers. In addition, a series of epidemics struck them, the major one being smallpox. As the tribe died out, it is believed that those who survived the disease may have later joined the Seminole Tribe.



The Timucua preserved meat by smoking it over a fire.