

*Appaloosa Horse*

The name “Appaloosa” comes from the Palouse River of Eastern Washington and is used to identify the breed of horses developed by the Nez Perce.

By the time Lewis and Clark met the Nez Perce people they were raising vast herds of superior horses. Lewis noted that one man owned 1,500 head, “50, 60 or a hundred head is not unusual for an individual to possess.” Both of the Captains were amazed at the quality of the animals and the skill with which they were handled. In his journal Lewis commented, “I have no hesitation in declaring my belief that the Indian method of gelding is preferable to that practiced by ourselves.” He went on to write, “It is astonishing to see these people ride down those steep hills which they do at full speed.”

The Nez Perce people embraced the horse and it had an enormous impact on their way of life, providing them the mobility to reach far beyond their traditional lands, allowing them to hunt buffalo in Montana, more effectively deal with their enemies and trade with far away tribes. The Nez Perce have recently instituted a modern program to reestablish their tradition of breeding superior horses.

## HELP US PROTECT PREHISTORIC SITES

**All historic and prehistoric artifacts are protected by law, with serious penalties for violators. This includes cultural material exposed on the land surface as well as sites covered by accumulations of dust and soil.**

**If you find traces of prehistoric use during your visit to the Nez Perce Forest, please do not disturb them. These precious archaeological remnants provide a fragile and irreplaceable link to the past.**

**Notify the nearest Forest Service office about your discovery. Scientists can gain significant knowledge of ancient people, their lives and culture from these sites and artifacts. Knowledge is lost forever when sites are disturbed.**

**We still have much to learn about the prehistory of the Nez Perce National Forest.**

**For further information on the history and prehistory of the Nez Perce Indians, please contact:**

**Nez Perce National Historical Park  
Box 93, Highway 95  
Spalding, ID 83551  
(208) 843-2261**

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United States  
Department of  
Agriculture



Forest Service

## ANCIENT PEOPLE of the NEZ PERCE NATIONAL FOREST



*Harder Phase Projectile Points  
(ca. 2000-700 Years Ago)*

*A Guide to the Prehistory  
of the Forest*

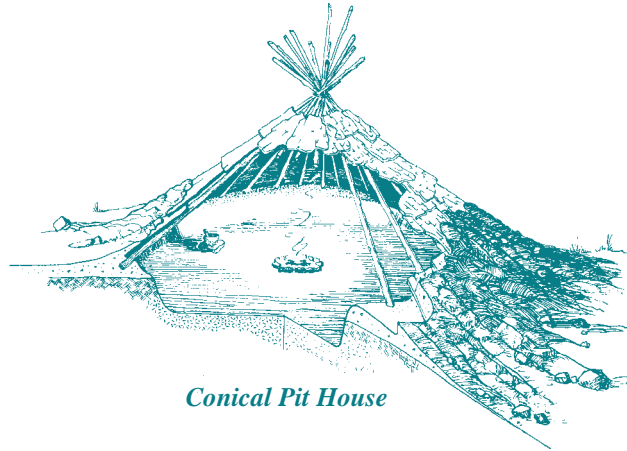
## THE NEZ PERCE PEOPLE

Humans have played, hunted, lived and died on the lands of the Nez Perce National Forest for 11,000 years or more. Long before any written records the Nez Perce Indians, their ancestors and others utilized the vast areas which now compose this marvelously diverse and unique unit of the National Forest System.

The Nez Perce Indians know themselves as the Numipu. Other variations are spelled Ne-mee-poo and nimpoo, or the “real people”. The name “Nez Perce” means “Pierced Nose” in French. The Shoshone tribe referred to the country west of the Bitterroots as the Land of the Pierced Nose Indians when communicating with the Lewis and Clark expedition. Clark wrote in his journal, “The Cho-pun-nish or Pierced nose Indians are Stout likely men, handsome women, and verry dressey in their way.” Later he wrote, “The ornaments worn by the Chopunnish are, in their nose a single shell of Wampom.” The Nez Perce were the only permanent residents of the lands now composing the Nez Perce National Forest, although other Native American groups visited, traded and traveled throughout the area.

## USE OF RESOURCES

Prehistoric occupants of the Nez Perce National Forest made use of the vast resources available there. These included a variety of plants, mammals, birds and fish. These highly mobile people procured resources at diverse locations throughout the forest in the spring, summer and fall, retreating to villages along the major rivers in the winter.



*Conical Pit House*

The Nez Perce constructed their homes from a variety of materials, taking full advantage of what was readily at hand. Many of their dwellings were semi-subterranean, with the floor excavated into the ground and the roof covered with earth and sod. These were easy to warm in the winter and cool in the summer. Their low profile protected occupants from the harsh winter winds.

## STONE TOOLS

Many of the Nez Perce’s tools for hunting, fishing, cooking, etc. were fashioned from stone. Often this material was river rounded cobble, obsidian, chert, basalt and chalcedony. Trade with neighboring people made stone types available that were not found in the Nez Perce’s own territory. Some of these tools were very crude, quickly fashioned for a project and immediately discarded. Others were carefully and painstakingly fashioned into tools or weapons that are nothing short of works of art.

## NEZ PERCE AND THE HORSE

While the horse originated in North America, it became extinct on this continent about 15,000 years ago. Luckily some of these marvelous animals had found their way across the land bridge to Asia. They thrived on the vast Asian grasslands, eventually spreading west to Europe. Humans soon learned to domesticate the horse and used them for transportation more than 5,000 years ago.

The Spaniards, in their campaign of conquest, reintroduced the horse to North America. As animals strayed, were stolen or lost in battle, native people soon acquired horses and enthusiastically assimilated them into their way of life. By 1690 the horse had reached the Shoshone people of Southern Idaho. Although they really had no pressing need for horses in their land of mountains and rivers, the Nez Perce were intrigued by the animals and soon traded for some. The Nez Perce lands proved to be a perfect place to raise horses.

The Nez Perce became skilled horsemen and learned to selectively breed superior animals, gelding the less desirable stallions and continuously upgrading their stock with new blood. While other tribes painted their horses with spots to make them colorful, the Nez Perce, with their selective breeding techniques, were able to produce hundreds of naturally spotted animals.

