

PRIMARY SOURCE ACTIVITY

(continued)

CHAPTER 2

Native American Customs

John Lawson was an Englishman who came to North Carolina in 1701 and made several expeditions into Native American lands. Below are his impressions of the Native Americans he encountered.

As you read, compare Lawson's impressions with the stereotype of Native Americans that emerged as a result of King Philip's War.

They are very kind and charitable to one another, but more especially to those of their own Nation; for if any one of them has suffered any Loss by Fire, or otherwise, they order the grieved person to make a Feast, and invite them all thereto, which, on the day appointed, they come to, and . . . one of their Speakers, or grave old Men, makes an Harrangue, and acquaints the Company, That the Man's House has been burnt, wherein all his Goods were destroyed; That he and his Family very narrowly escaped . . . and, That it is all their Duties to help him, as he would do to any of them had the like Misfortune befallen them. After this Oration is over, every Man, according to his Quality, throws him down upon the Ground some Present, which is commonly Beads, Ronoak, Peak, Skins, or Furs, and which very often amounts to treble the Loss he has suffered.

The same Assistance they give to any Man that wants to build a Cabin, or make a Canoe. They say it is our Duty thus to do; for there are several Works that one Man cannot effect, therefore we must give him our Help, otherwise our Society will fall, and we shall be deprived of those urgent Necessities which Life requires. They have no Fence to part one anothers Lots in their Corn-Fields, but every Man knows his own, and it scarce ever happens that they rob one another

of so much as an Ear of Corn. . . . It often happens that a Woman is destitute of her Husband, and has a great many Children to maintain; such a Person they always help, and make their young men plant, reap, and do every thing that she is not capable of doing herself; yet they do not allow any one to be idle, but to employ themselves in some Work or other.

They never fight with one another unless drunk, nor do you ever hear any Scolding amongst them. They say the Europeans are always ranging and uneasy, and wonder they do not go out of this World, since they are so uneasy and discontented in it. All their Misfortunes and Losses end in Laughter; for if their Cabins take Fire, and all their Goods are burnt therein . . . such a Misfortune always ends in a hearty Fitt of Laughter, unless some of their Kinsfolks and Friends have lost their Lives. . . .

There is one Vice very common everywhere, which I never found amongst them, which is, Envyng other Men's happiness, because their station is not equal to, or above their Neighbors. Of this Sin I cannot say I ever saw an Example, though they are a People that set as great a Value upon themselves, as any sort of Men, in the World, upon which Account they find something Valuable in themselves above Riches. . . .

from History of North Carolina by John Lawson, Garrett and Massie, 1951

Questions to Think About

1. How did Lawson view the Native Americans he encountered? What Native American customs did he admire?
2. **Making Comparisons** According to Lawson, what were some basic differences between Native Americans and Europeans?