Early Native Americans lived off the land—they ate only what they hunted, gathered, made or grew themselves. They made their own clothes, homes and medicine out of materials they found around them. Native Americans all lived off the land, but they did not live the same way. Many tribes lived in Texas at different times, and each had their own languages, cultures and customs.
Some Native Americans hunted the American bison, an animal often called a buffalo. There are still bison in Texas today. The bison lived wild on the plains. Hunters used tracking skills to find the bison, and made weapons to kill them. They used every part of the bison for their daily needs.

Tribes made their own baskets, clay and stone pots, weapons, houses and tools. For farming tribes, waterproof clay pots were needed to store food for the winter and to carry water. For traveling tribes, baskets were used to carry belongings and food. They might also contain items to trade with other tribes.

Native Americans ate more than just bison. Many of the foods they gathered can still be found here today. Mustang grapes, Texas persimmons and Mexican plums are sweet, juicy wild fruits. Pecans grew along the rivers, then and now. Honey mesquite beans and acorns were ground up to make breads. Native plants, like sotol and prickly pear, hide delicious food under spikes and thorns. Hunters brought home rabbits, wild turkey, deer and fish. Tribes who farmed grew corn, pumpkins, sunflowers, squash, beans and tobacco.
Jessica Vandivier and Ann Vandivier Brodnax of Llano Springs Ranch, recipients of this year’s top recognition, the Leopold Conservation Award. Texas landowners are our best hope. The Lone Star Land Steward Awards recognize private landowners for outstanding habitat management and wildlife conservation. In Texas, more than 95 percent of land is privately owned or managed, making the work of landowners important to all of us. We salute all 14 of the Lone Star Land Steward Award winners.

To become a sponsor or nominate a landowner, call (512) 389-4395 or visit www.tpwd.state.tx.us/landsteward.

Native Americans made their own jewelry from items they found in nature. Shells, stones, bones, feathers, seeds, and bones were strung in different combinations to make necklaces or decorate hair and clothes. We still use many of the same materials, like turquoise and sea shells, to make jewelry. Go outside and collect natural items like leaves, feathers and acorns. Ask an adult to help you poke holes in what you find. Using string or yarn, make your own necklace or bracelet.

Many Native American tribes called Texas home. Find where you live on the map. Which tribes lived there before you?

Many Native Americans didn’t have a written language as we know it. Instead they painted symbols called pictographs to tell stories. Pictographs were both art and communication. The paintings represented people, animals and other things they saw in nature. Using these as a guide, create your own symbols. Can you use them to tell a story about your family, friends or school?

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