

In Our Own Time: Native American Timekeeping



When Europeans arrived in North America, they brought their own calendars and understanding of the passage of time. Native peoples, they found, related to time in ways both similar and very different. Decide whether the following statements on Native timekeeping practices are true or false.

1. Winter counts, kept by the Lakota people, mark each year in a Lakota band's history with a picture depicting an important event. For the year 1833, many Lakota winter counts show the same event: stars falling from the night sky.

- True
- False

2. Prior to introduction to European calendar systems, the Native peoples of Alaska used peg calendars, wooden calendars in which a peg was moved forward in a series of holes day by day to mark the passage of time.

- True
- False

3. The Winnebago Native Americans recorded time using calendar sticks, in which notches were cut to signify important events, lunar cycles, years, and other units of distinction and division.

- True
- False

4. The Hopi calendar divides the year into four sections. Spirits known as katsinas (or kachinas) visit the Hopi people in two of these sections, alternating with the two sections free of the spirits.

- True
- False

Sources:

Alaska Virtual Library and Digital Archives, <http://vilda.alaska.edu/> (accessed September 25, 2009).

Harvard University, Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, *Rainmakers from the Gods: Hopi Katsinam*, <http://140.247.102.177/katsina/> (accessed September 25, 2009).



Kathleen Lidfors, "Review: *Russian America: The Forgotten Frontier*," *The Public Historian* 12, no. 2 (Spring 1991).

Alexander Marshack, "A Lunar-Solar Year Calendar Stick from North America," *American Antiquity* 50, no. 1 (Jan. 1985).

Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History, National Anthropological Archives, *Lakota Winter Counts*, <http://wintercounts.si.edu/index.html> (accessed September 25, 2009).

<http://teachinghistory.org/history-content/quiz>