

# *Taino/Arawak Fact Sheet*

The Arawak Indians once lived in South America and on islands in the Caribbean Sea. The island Arawak, or Taino, were the Indians the explorer Christopher Columbus met on his first journey to the Americas.

The Arawak lived in large villages. They built their houses from logs, poles, and the leaves of palm trees. They got most of their food by farming. They also fished, caught shellfish, and hunted birds, lizards, and other small animals.

The Arawak first lived in northern South America. Then they spread to the Caribbean islands. Shortly before Europeans arrived, the warlike Carib people pushed the Arawak off the islands called the Lesser Antilles. Columbus met the Arawak in 1492. At that time the Arawak lived only on the Greater Antilles (Cuba, Jamaica, Hispaniola, and Puerto Rico).

Columbus' men and the Spaniards who followed them treated the Arawak harshly. They forced the Arawak to work in fields and in mines. Some Arawak died of starvation. Many others died of diseases brought by the Europeans.

By 1550 the island Arawak population had been reduced from 1 million or more to almost nothing. Their traditional way of life largely disappeared as well. Small groups of Arawak managed to survive. Their descendants now live in Cuba, Puerto Rico, and Florida.

"Arawak." Britannica Library, Encyclopaedia Britannica, 7 Feb. 2020.

[library.eb.com/levels/children/article/Arawak/352774](https://library.eb.com/levels/children/article/Arawak/352774). Accessed 12 Aug. 2020.