

American Indians of the Upper Mississippi River



National Mississippi River Museum & Aquarium

History Education Curriculum

Target Grades:	3 rd - 8 th
Key Words:	American Indians, Native Americans,
Subject Areas:	History and time periods of American Indians
Duration:	45 minutes

Title: *American Indians of the Upper Mississippi River*

Summary:

Imagine a time before European settlers arrived when American Indian villages dotted the riverbanks and ceremonial and burial mounds could be seen on the river bluffs. During this presentation students will learn about the various time periods of the American Indians who lived along the Upper Mississippi River Valley. Various tools, foods, and life ways of the Upper Mississippi River American Indians will be discussed and some of the tools will be demonstrated to the students.

The various characteristics that anthropologists and archaeologists use to determine these various time periods will be highlighted.

Objectives:

To get an understanding of the people who first arrived in America, what brought them here, and how they lived from the resources that they found in the Mississippi River watershed and beyond.. Also to follow the progression of how American Indians adapted to the land they lived in, developed new tools and techniques, and lived off of the land where they lived.

Group Size: Any sized group, but ideally less than 40 students

Background for Educators:

American Indians or “Native Americans” were the first people to arrive in the Mississippi River watershed. Nothing is known about the names of various tribal groups since there were no written histories, and only sketchy information is known about early cultures from tools and artifacts that have been found or excavated along the rivers and streams of the watershed.

Native Americans of the Upper Mississippi River Valley

Native Americans arrived along the Mississippi River between 10,000 and 12,000 years ago, as the last glacier melted. The first people to arrive probably hunted some of the ice age animals such as mammoths, bears, musk ox, giant bison and elk, and many animals that are now extinct or gone (extirpated) from this area. Many of the early hunters were nomadic and traveled to follow wild game and to find plants for food. These early people are known as Paleo Indians.

Eventually some of the Native Americans began farming crops such as corn, squash, pumpkins, and beans and since they tended their fields along with hunting game, they established more permanent villages. They also buried their dead near their villages, often in mounds. Some of the ceremonial mounds were built in the shapes of animals, with some the most famous being found at the Effigy Mounds National Monument near McGregor, Iowa..

As Settlers moved closer to the Mississippi River some of the Native American tribes moved in from other areas and pushed out people who were living there. When the explorers and settlers came they pushed out some of the Native Americans that had moved in to the area. When Julien Dubuque arrived in 1788, he made friends with the Native Americans living along the Mississippi as they were the people he traded with for furs that they trapped and lead that they mined. The Mesquaki (also known as Fox) were the people living in the Mississippi River Valley at that time and many names of streams, rivers, and local areas bear names from that time period. Names such as Sinsinawa, Maquoketa, Muscatine, Potosi, Peosta, Winona, Kickapoo, Wyalusing, Wisconsin, Illinois, and Iowa are only a few Native American names heard along the river.

Materials Needed:

American Indian study trunk at the National Mississippi River Museum & Aquarium including the following:

- Time line
- Pump drill
- Bone awl
- Corn grinding mortar and pestle
- Foods of corn, dried pumpkin, beans, and dried meat
- Projectile points
- atlatl
- Bow and arrows
- Flint knapping tools
- Red ochre (for paint)
- Feathers
- Birch bark
- Deer hide

Procedure:

Have the students sit in a comfortable area outside or in a quiet area (Otter Overlook or log cabin) away from distractions of other visitors, classes, moving animals, or noise from the river or railroad. Introduce the topic of American Indians discussing the various “correct” terminology used to label this ethnic group, such as Indians, Native Americans, First Americans, American Indians, or their various known tribal names such as Mesquaki, Ojibway, Winnebago (Ho-Chunk), Mandan, Ioway, Sioux, or other known names.

Try and dispel any myths such as: All Indians live in tepees, all projectile points are “arrow heads”, American Indians hunted for all of their food, all were buffalo hunters, all wore buckskin clothing, all Native Americans were “savage” or warlike.

A potential outline for a program on American Indians could be like the following:

- Introduce the various names and terminology used to talk about American Indians (ie. Indians, savages, Native Americans, American Indians, first Americans)
- Talk about some of the concepts, myths, and mis-information that people have about American Indians (all live in tepees and rode horses)
- Use the time line to discuss various periods of American Indians and how these periods are determined by certain criteria and characteristics
- Discuss differences between the atlatl and bow and arrow, demonstrate how the atlatl would have been used
- Artifact recognition as to how it is used to determine age or time periods of various periods (replica or original projectile points and other tools)
- Various dwellings wickiup, tipi, earth lodge, bark long house, N.W. Coast cedar house, cliff dwellings, kiva
- Traditional American crops: corn, beans, wild rice, squash, pumpkins, peppers, melons, tomatoes, tobacco, potatoes, gourds
- Types of animals hunted in various parts of the country and during various time periods
- Burial types:
 - flatland burials
 - conical mounds or effigy mounds (bird=sky, bear=land, lizard=water)
- leatherwork and textiles
- fire starting fireboard and bow drill vs. flint and steel in later years
- flint knapping to produce tools
- hand drills - dowel drill and pump drill
- paints and dyes natural ochre colors and dyes from plants
- use of various tools - scrapers, knives, projectile points, grinding stone,
- rope making
- use of bone and antler (awls, hoes, fish hooks, needles, porcupine quill flattener)

American Indians of the Upper Mississippi River Valley

Paleo Indians	10,000 or 12,000 B.C. ---- 6,000 B.C	<p>Hunters and gatherers of the late Pleistocene (Ice Age), probably hunted mammoths, mastodons, giant ground sloths, bison, elk, musk ox, camels, and other large animals. Clovis and Folsom projectile points</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Clovis projectile points</i></p>
Archaic Indians	6,000 B.C. ---- 500 B.C.	<p>Hunters of large prehistoric bison and elk Extensive use of atlatl spear thrower for hunting and warfare flexed burials Perhaps the beginning of agriculture in the late Archaic period</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>St. Charles "Dovetail" point</i></p>
Woodland Indians	500 B.C. ----1000 A.D.	<p>Conical burial mounds with burial offerings signifying organized religion. Grit tempered and cord impressed pottery. Small villages. Hunting with some agriculture.</p> <p>1) Early Woodland Period 500 B.C. ----- 200 A.D. agriculture introduced, first known use of pottery, burial mounds, use of atlatl spear thrower for hunting and warfare</p> <p>2) Middle Woodland Period 200 A.D. ----- 500 A.D. burial mounds, broad trading network, extensive use of pottery, use of atlatl spear thrower for hunting and warfare</p> <p>3) Late Woodland Period 500 A.D. ----- 1000 A.D. true arrow heads and use of bow, burial mounds and effigy ceremonial mounds</p>
Post Woodland or Mississippian Indians	1000A.D. -----1600 A.D	<p>Agriculture supplemented by hunting, small to medium sized villages, flatland burials (not mounds), elaborate shell tempered pottery</p> <p>1) Nebraska Culture - Central Plains Tradition 2) Mill Creek Culture – Middle Missouri Tradition 3) Great Oasis Culture – Middle Missouri Tradition? Oneota Tradition</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Cahokia Fish hook and true arrowhead from Cahokia</i></p>
Ethno historic Indians	1600 A.D. -----1800 A.D	<p>Siouan speakers west of the Mississippi River; influx of Algonquian speakers from east of the Mississippi River. Tribes are fairly well known from this period</p> <p>Omaha, Oto, Ioway, (from Oneota) Mesquaki (Sac and Fox), Illinois, Ho-Chunk (Winnebago), Miami, Menominee from Wisconsin</p>

Evaluation:

From comments and questions from students.

Additional resources:

Handbook of Native American Games, Allan and Paulette Macfarlan, Dover Press 1985.

Native American Crafts:

Schneider, Richard C., **Crafts of The North American Indians**, Van Nostrand Reinhold Company N.Y. 1972, 325 pages. (Excellent step by step instructions and illustrations on various Indian crafts such as tools, skin and leather work, beadwork, basketry and pottery.)

Hunt, Ben W., **The Complete How To Book of Indian Craft**, Collier Books - Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc. New York, 1973, 187 pages (This book shows a great variety of Indian crafts and contains excellent illustrations.)

Native American use of plants:

Densmore, Frances, **How Indians Use Wild Plants for Food, Medicine, and Crafts**, Dover Publications, Inc. New York, 1974, 118 pages.

Gilmore, Melvin R., **Uses of Plants by the Indians of the Missouri River Region**, University of Nebraska Press, 1977, 109 pages. (Interesting references to uses of wild and cultivated plants)

Native American artifacts:

Morrow, Toby, **Iowa Projectile Points**, University of Iowa Press, Special publication of the Office of the State Archeologist, 111 illustrations covering 100 projectile points.

Anthropology:

Kroeber, Theodora, **Ishi in Two Worlds** (a biography of the last wild Indian in North America, University of California Press, Berkley, California, 1961, 255 pages. (Very interesting account of the last remaining Indian of a now extinct West Coast tribe)

Hartman, Sheryl, **Indian Clothing of the Great Lakes: 1740 -1840**, Eagle's View Publishing.

Extensions:

Visit the Old Jail Museum in Dubuque to see the artifacts from the Hermann Collection. Visit the wickiup in the wetland area of the National Mississippi River Museum & Aquarium, and perhaps help with the sewing of cattail mats if in the early fall of the year. Visit the Effigy Mounds National Monument near McGregor, Iowa or other mounds located along the Upper Mississippi River such as Gramercy Park in East Dubuque, Ill., Bellevue State Park in Iowa, Little Maquoketa River Mounds near Dubuque,

Credits:

Mark D. Wagner, Director of Visitor Experience, Dubuque County Historical Society
Iowa Resource Enhancement and Protection, Conservation Education Program (REAP CEP)
Grant
Iowa State Archaeological Society