

Algonquians of the Northeast

- ## Language Groups of NE
- Algonquians
 - Ojibwe
 - Penobscot
 - Narragansett
 - Pequot
 - Menominee
 - Mesquakie
 - Iroquoians
 - Seneca
 - Cayuga
 - Onondaga
 - Oneida
 - Mohawk
 - Huron



Algonquian Subsistence

- One major difference between Algonquians and Iroquoians: subsistence methods.
- Algonquians: hunting, gathering, and some cultivation in southern regions.
- Iroquoians: Cultivated crops central to subsistence system.

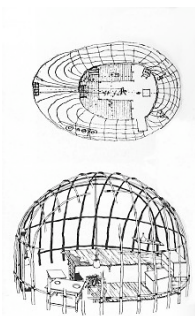
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Algonquian Architecture

- Primary architectural form: the wigwam.
- Once a stereotypic structure associated with all Indians.
- Frame: bent saplings, tied together at top.
- Oblong or circular in shape.
- Contained raised platforms for beds.

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Wigwam Plan



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House building

- Division of labor:
 - Men cut wood, framed the house.
 - Women created the wall coverings and put them in place
 - 2 types of coverings:
 - Birch bark sheets secured by poles
 - Fiber mats, woven by women

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Wigwam with Mat Covering

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Wigwam with Birch Bark Covering

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Living and Moving

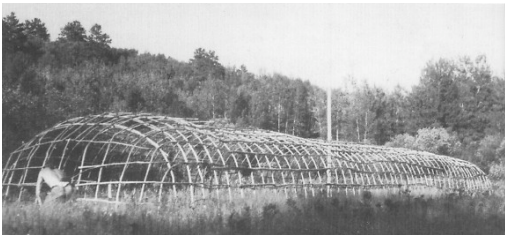
- As hunters and gatherers, the Algonquians moved from place to place fairly often.
- Seasonal round:
 - Summer: large groups of people together.
 - Winter: Smaller groups, for better access to resources.

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Ceremonial Architecture

- Two forms of ceremonial architecture used by Algonquians:
 - Midewiwin Lodge, like an oblong wigwam.
 - Ceremonies reenacted people's journey from the place of origin to the present.
 - Birch bark scrolls: symbols and images record events; very sacred.

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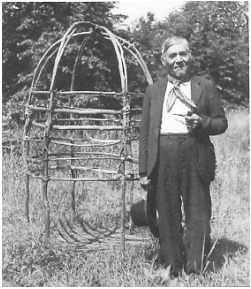
Midewiwin Lodge

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Shaman's Shaking Tent

- Other form of ceremonial architecture: the Shaking Tent.
- Phone-booth sized sapling structure.
- Used by shamans to answer questions for the tribe.
- Answers come from Manitou spirits – cause the shaman to shake, visibly causing the small house to move.

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Shaking Tent


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Mesquakie Tribe

- Mesquakie, along with Ojibwe and Menominee are some of relatively few Algonquian tribes that still exist.
- Mesquakie traditional land: eastern Wisconsin.
- Neighbors: Sauk, Kickapoo.
- Menominee also in the area.

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Traditional Culture Areas



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Mesquakie Origin Story

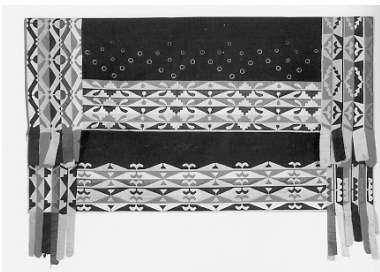
- Prominently influenced by Manitou, or spirits.
- Mesquakie = first people.
- Common Algonquian theme: earth formed on back of a turtle.
- Manitou will one day destroy earth and Mesquakie will return to original condition.

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Physical Appearance

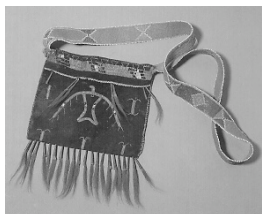
- Men: hair plucked (later shaved), leaving only central tuft of hair as scalp lock.
- Clothing: deerskin
- Porcupine quill decoration prominent feature of traditional designs.

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Mesquakie Ribbon Decoration

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Anishinabe Manitou Bag

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Village Locations

- Summer villages:
 - Many people
 - Located on rivers
 - Some crops planted
 - Used bark and fiber mat coverings.
- Winter: group split up; simpler structures used.

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Subsistence

- Spring and summer: crops of maize, beans, and squash – women’s work. Women also collected wild plants.
- Men hunted deer, birds, rabbits.
- Foods dried, stored for winter use.

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Family and Kinship

- Patrilineal descent for most Algonquians.
- Clans: Bear, Fox, Wolf, Thunder, Swan, Eagle, Sturgeon, Bear Potato.
- Moiety division by birth order, to manage ceremonies and hunting.
- Polygyny.

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Political Life

- War and peace factions existed.
- Bear clan traditionally provided peace chief; Fox clan provided the war chief.
- Two groups balanced each other in deciding on actions.
- Leadership by consensus, not by coercion.

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Warfare

- Individuals formed war parties based on persuasion, prior success.
- Warriors free to decide whether to participate.
- Scalping done.

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Religion

- Individual relationship with the Manitou the centerpiece of religion for Mesquakie, as most Algonquians.
- Religion required no intermediary, but direct relationship.
- Vision quests pursued, especially by young men.
- Tobacco used in all ceremonies.
- Sacred bundles: clan artifacts for ceremonies.

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Status of Women

- Practice of menstrual seclusion.
 - Often misunderstood by male anthropologists.
 - Based on strong Manitou power of menstruating women, not “pollution.”
- Women developed skill in beadwork, quills, hide working.

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Marriage

- Societies in which women are valued require groom to compensate the bride's family for marriage.
- 2 methods possible:
 - Bride price paid by groom and his family.
 - Bride service: groom worked for bride's father for a period of time.

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Two-Spirit People and Gender

- Mesquakie recognized Two-spirit people, usually men who performed the gender role of women.
- Respected place in society.
- French used term "berdache," meaning "transvestite" – but misleading concept.

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Burial Methods

- Two types of burials used:
 - Scaffold burials in trees until flesh gone, then burial of bones in bundle.
 - Burial in shallow pits in flexed position, with the head inside a little house. Food and water provided.

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European Contact

- First contact was with French; not successful relationship.
- French formed alliance with Ojibwe and Winnebago, and warfare began in 1728. Sauk gave Mesquakie sanctuary, and they joined to flee south to Illinois.
- Mesquakie tried to return, but Ojibwe drove them back.

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Sauk and Mesquakie

- The U.S. Government treated the Sauk and Mesquakie as one people, and in a treaty of 1804, abrogated all territory of Mesquakie without consent.
- War of 1812: Americans wanted to prevent Mesquakie and Sauk from forming alliance with British, so removed them to Missouri. Black Hawk, Sauk leader, allied them with the British.

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Black Hawk War

- Black Hawk, now leading the combined tribes, attempted to return to Wisconsin, but war resulted.
- Black Hawk captured near Wisconsin Dells, ending war in 1832.
- Black Hawk allowed to return after a tour of U.S. military facilities, designed to discourage him from fighting.

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Mesquakie Seek New Home

- In 1832, Mesquakie had no land left, so attempted to go to Kansas, but land ill-suited to their ways of life.
- Returned to Iowa in 1856 to establish a community, where they still remain.
- Adopted nuclear family units, European dress, and an annual Powwow.

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Current Status

- Political factions of traditionalists and progressives remain in conflict over tribal decisions and directions.
- Casino-style gambling introduced in 1992 over objections of traditionalists, but has provided successful source of income for the 1,253 enrolled members of the tribe.

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