

# NATIVE AMERICANS PEOPLE OF THE FOREST

1 videocassette ... 24 minutes

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## BEHIND THE SCENES

Every effort *has* been made toward making this video accurate and authentic.

The featured Ojibwa village, wardrobe and props, were designed by Nick Hockings, a member of the Ojibwa tribe and an internationally recognized authority on Ojibwa culture. Nick has spent much of his life learning about the "old ways," and he and his wife, Charlotte, are devoted to passing this knowledge on to future generations. With Nick and Charlotte supervising, dozens of workers, many of them volunteers, spent weeks constructing the set, located on the Lac du Flambeau reservation in northern Wisconsin. All featured props were historically hand-crafted using authentic techniques and materials.

Native Americans featured in the video are Ojibwa and the dialogue occasionally heard in the video is Ojibwa as well. Many key personnel who worked on this production are Ojibwa, and the production was made with the cooperation of Ojibwa tribal leaders.

All featured museum pieces were verified by the Milwaukee Public Museum.

The producers relied on only highly respected books, articles, academic advisors, and original documents. They conferred with Native American leaders to insure an accurate and sensitive portrayal of the Ojibwa people.

The producers also worked closely with educational consultants to assure that this program is specific to textbook, framework and syllabus objectives.

## PRINCIPAL CREDITS

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assisted in the recreation of the props,  
costumes and Ojibwa village

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*Video and teacher's guide produced for*  
*Rainbow Educational Media by Peter*  
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## INTRODUCTION

This video is designed to introduce students to Native Americans of the Eastern Woodlands and to help establish an affinity for their culture.

Painstakingly researched and authentically recreated, this video provides a rare glimpse of a unique culture in an entertaining and engaging format.

Students will see that the Eastern Woodlands is a unique region of dense forests, lakes and rivers. It is an area rich in natural resources and the home of many accomplished tribes: Ojibwa, Powhatan, Fox, Seminole and many others.

The focus of the video is the pre-1600's, before significant European intrusion into the Eastern Woodlands, where the culture revolved around hunting, fishing, and gathering.

The video depicts a day in the life of an Ojibwa tribe as told through the narrative voice of Little Flower, a 13-year-old girl. Students will learn how the Ojibwa fished; hunted; made hunting, fishing and cooking implements; built shelters; and made fire.

## OBJECTIVES

After viewing the video, students should know:

- where Native Americans originated
- the unique natural environment of the Woodlands
- the names of other Native American groups
- prominent Woodlands tribes
- types of implements used in hunting and fishing
- how Woodlands Indians hunted and fished
- how Woodlands Indians made fire
- how food was cooked
- how birch bark was stripped from trees
- how wigwams were constructed
- how a birch bark container was constructed
- the role of shamans in Woodlands culture
- the Woodlands view of the natural and spiritual world
- some of the games played by Woodlands children
- that while Woodlands children may have led different lives, they had many things in common with children of today

## SUMMARY

The video opens by portraying the natural environment of the Eastern Woodlands with images of dense forests, lakes and rivers.

Historic photographs then introduce students to tribes which lived in this region, the "forest people", including Ojibwa, Powhatan, Fox and Seminole. The narrator explains that while the tribes had different names and languages, they all did many things alike, including hunting in the forests, fishing the lakes and rivers and building their homes from materials the forest provided.

Museum pieces introduce students to artifacts left behind by the forest people, and these include bark baskets, wooden bowls, masks, war clubs, and ornaments.

Beautiful scenics accompany the Native American view that everything in the natural world had a spiritual life, and everything was connected to everything else in a spiritual way.

Posing the questions, "Who were the Forest People?", and "Where did they come from?", the video segues to an animation sequence that shows the probable migratory route of all Native Americans: from Asia, across the Bering Land Bridge that existed some 30,000 years ago.

Animation also shows how Native Americans settled into various regional groups, distinguished by common adaptations to unique natural environments. Students learn that one of the groups, Native Americans of the Eastern Woodlands, inhabited a land of vast forests, rivers, lakes, and streams.

This video then follows an Ojibwa family in their day-to-day activities, as told through the voice of Wa-Ba-Gonce (Little Flower), a young Ojibwa girl.

We learn that Little Flower is frustrated, stuck with doing women's chores while her brothers do fun-filled and exciting things like hunting and fishing.

We then watch as her brothers are shown setting snares and traps with their father.

Little Flower recounts how her brother was treated like a hero when he made his first kill, and that inspires Little Flower to sneak off with her father's canoe to make her first kill. As she paddles across the lake, she reflects on life in her village.

We see her and her mother stripping bark from a birch tree. The bark is used to cover their wigwams. Students learn that wigwams are made each season, when the Ojibwa move their camp.

Little Flower's mother and another woman are shown erecting a wigwam by tying birch bark sections to a frame of bent saplings.

Another woman in the village is shown making a birch bark basket and students get a chance to observe some of the rudimentary but effective tools used by the Ojibwa.

Little Flower reflects that birch was given to her people by the great spirit Gitchimanidoo. But sometimes Gitchimanidoo does not favor them and the people must sometimes seek the help of a spiritual elder. The elder is shown treating a sick child by calling upon spirit helpers to aid him in his treatment. The elder is also shown purifying a newly erected wigwam with burning sweet grass.

Next, we see Little Flower's mother making a fire by using a bow drill and then preparing a dinner of deer stew.

Meanwhile, Little Flower's brothers are shown making a fish trap, a hook and a spear, with their father. We see many of these things in use as the father is shown retrieving a trap, and a net, and going night spearing with another man.

Students will appreciate learning that life in an Ojibwa village wasn't all work. There was also time for games, and the video features several popular ones played by many Woodlands tribes.

In the climax, Little Flower is shown hunting for bear when she encounters an enemy brave. She narrowly escapes and comes to the realization that life in her village isn't so bad even if they don't let her do fun-filled and exciting things.

In the conclusion, students learn that the ways of life of Woodlands tribes were forever changed with the arrival of Europeans on this continent.

## **REVIEW QUESTIONS**

### **1. When and how did Native Americans arrive in North America?**

Most anthropologists today accept the theory that all Native Americans are descendants of Asian peoples who migrated to this continent in pursuit of game animals as long ago as 30,000 years, crossing a land bridge that once existed where the Bering Sea is today.

### **2. How long did the migration take?**

There were probably several migrations spread over thousands of years.

### **3. Where did these Asian people settle?**

They settled in all parts of North and South America, adapting to the unique natural environments found in the various regions.

### **4. How are Native Americans classified?**

While Native Americans can be classified in a number of ways, including language and tribal affiliation, the video focuses on classification by group, according to the common habits and customs acquired to adapt to a region's natural environment.

### **5. How many groups are there?**

Seven are featured in this video which covers all U.S. states, excluding Hawaii and portions of Alaska. The seven featured groups are the Eastern Woodlands, the Plains, the Southwest, the Plateau, the Great Basin, California, and the Northwest Coast.

**6. What tribes are named in the video?**

Ojibwa, Powhatan, Fox, Seminole, Huron, Iroquois, Cherokee, Creek, Natchez, Winnebago, and others.

**7. What did these tribes have in common?**

They hunted in the forests, and fished the lakes and rivers.

**8. What fishing methods were featured in the video?**

Traps, nets, spearing, and hook and line.

**9. Why did the Indians use torches for spear fishing at night?**

The fish are attracted to the light.

**10. How were animals caught?**

With traps, snares, and pit traps.

**11. What type of container was used for cooking?**

Birch bark baskets.

**12. How was water heated for cooking?**

A birch bark container was filled with water and placed above the fire to allow heat to warm the water.

**13. How was birch bark removed from the tree?**

A vertical cut was made with a sharpened stone and the birch bark was stripped away in large sections.

**14. Why was tobacco offered before cutting the birch bark?**

To show respect to the Great Spirit, Gitchimanidoo, who provided the bark to the people.

**15. What other items were made from birch bark or wood as shown in the video?**

Woven baskets, carved bowls, canoes, toys, musical instruments, war clubs, baby cradle, and shelters.

**16. Does bark stripping kill the tree?**

No. The tree seals itself.

**17. How were wigwams constructed?**

Saplings were bent over and tied together to form a frame and then covered with bark.

**18. In the video a cattail skirt was placed around the bottom of the wigwam. Why?**

This was a summer wigwam and a cattail skirt allowed for ventilation.

**19. How was a basket constructed in the video?**

From a single piece of birch bark a form was cut out and then folded and sewn together.

**20. What tool was used to cut the bark?**

A sharpened stone.

**21. How was fire made?**

Dry grass was placed between two sections of wood and a stick was spun with a bow to create heat.

**22. Who were spiritual elders?**

Medicine men and shamans who were believed to have supernatural powers and could cure the sick.

**23. Name some of the games played by the children depicted in the video.**

Target practice, spear throwing, foot racing, double ball, and lacrosse.

**24. Why was Little Flower frustrated?**

Because she was a girl and could not hunt, fish and trap as the boys did.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

These questions are designed to encourage classroom discussion

### **1. We know from the video that the forest people hunted large and small animals.**

*Question: Animals were hunted primarily for food but what were some other uses?*

- clothing from hides and fur
- bone for tools, weapons, utensils, ornamentation
- teeth for tools, ornamentation
- sinew for thread

### **2. In the video we see children playing target practice, spear throw, double ball, and lacrosse.**

*Question: How would playing games help develop skills needed to hunt and fish?*

Many skills used in games were useful for hunting and fishing. Games helped improve general coordination and stamina, and instill a competitive spirit.

### **3. The video explains the importance of shamans in Woodlands culture.**

*Question: Are there counterparts to shamans in modern society?*

Priests, rabbis, ministers and other religious leaders fulfill many of the same functions as shamans and act as intermediaries between the physical and spiritual worlds.

**4. Little Flower was frustrated because she was not permitted to go hunting.**

*Question: Do women of today face the same-kind of frustrations?*

While sexual stereotypes still exist, women have made significant progress in breaking through many occupational barriers.

**5. We are shown a few foods indigenous to the area: deer, fish, and wild rice.**

*Question: Can you name other foods native to this region?*

Wild roots, berries, nuts, wild potatoes, beans, squash, onions, maple sugar and a variety of game animals and birds, to name a few.

**6. The video features Woodlands Indians using bark to make their dwellings.**

*Question: If the Woodlands Indians hadn't had bark, what other materials might they've used to cover their dwellings?*

Answers include animal skins, fur and branches.

**7. Many children are fascinated by Native American life as it was in the past.**

*Question: Comparing it to modern life, how would Indian life have been better or worse?*

There are countless specific answers, but in general, Native Americans led comparatively simple lives, living close to nature. People today have modern conveniences but must live with stresses such as crime, congestion, pollution, etc.

## ACTIVITIES

These activities are designed to encourage students to learn more about some of the things covered in the video.

**1. The video discusses Native Americans as descendants of Asian peoples who migrated to this continent as long ago as 30,000 years, crossing a land bridge that once connected Asia with North America. Many Native Americans living today don't accept this explanation, citing accounts of their own which have been passed down orally from previous generations.**

Activity: Ask students to research books on Indian legends at the library and report back to the class how a selected tribe explains its origin.

**2. Wigwams were constructed of bent saplings and bark.**

Activity: Have students build miniature wigwams out of green twigs and bark.

**3. The Woodlands covers a vast portion of the United States.**

Activity: Have students draw a map of the region with its significant topography, natural resources and major tribes.

**4. The video shows the construction of a birch bark basket.**

Activity: Have students construct a basket out of construction paper. Use yarn to stitch the seams together.

**5. Indians wore clothing made from animal skins.**

Activity: Have students research and report how hides were made into clothing and leather.

**6. The video ends just before Europeans entered the continent.**

Activity: Ask students to research and report how the Indian way of life changed with the arrival of the Europeans.

**7. Children in the video are shown playing lacrosse.**

Activity: Have students research the history of lacrosse and report how the game has changed over the years.

## GLOSSARY

**anthropologist:** person who studies the origins, characteristics, customs and beliefs of a people.

**awl:** pointed instrument used for making small holes.

**clan:** group of people with a common family.

**cradle board:** type of infant bed.

**descendants:** offspring, children

**environment:** that which comprises all the things of a specific place or region.

**Gitchimanidoo:** Ojibwa word for Great Spirit.

**gourds:** dried shells of plants used as ornamentation, flasks, dippers, and musical instruments.

**herb:** plant valued for its medicinal properties.

**lacrosse:** game in which two opposing teams attempt to send a small ball into a net goal, using a special stick which has a pocket at the end to catch, carry, and throw the ball.

**migration:** the movement of people or animals from one region to another.

**Mukwa:** Ojibwa word for bear.

**ornament:** decoration designed to improve the appearance of something.

**respect:** show regard or consideration for.

**sacred:** holy, divine, revered

**saplings:** young trees.

**snare:** noose for capturing birds or small animals.

**spirit:** supernatural being without physical form.

**technique:** manner or method of doing something.

**toboggan:** flat-bottomed sled curved upward at the front, used to travel over snow and ice.

**weegoob:** Ojibwa word for the inner bark of the basswood tree. Used for tying and lacing.

**wigwam:** hut or lodge made from bent saplings and covered with bark or skins.

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# SCRIPT

## Little Flower

I was walking through the forest in search of game. I hoped I wouldn't run into any enemies. **Rainbow Show**

### Opener

#### Narrator

The forest speaks with many voices: the wind, the water, the forest animals and birds.

They each have their voice. They each have their story. A common story, centuries old. The story of the forest people.

### **Super Main Title: Native Americans: People of the Forest**

The people of the forest had many names: Ojibwa, Powhatan, Fox, Seminole, and many others. Each had different names. Each spoke different languages. But they all did many things alike.

They were great hunters, hunting deer, moose and other game animals.

In the winter, northern tribes wore snow shoes for tracking and hunting.

Some tribes used toboggans pulled by dogs.

They fished the lakes and rivers, sometimes at night, with spears and torches.

And they all made their homes from what the forest provided them, often using the bark of trees to cover their wigwams and teepees.

They also made beautiful baskets from the bark of trees.

Bowls were carved from wood.

Wood was used for many items; a child's toy canoe.

This gourd was used as a musical instrument.

This is a beautifully carved flute.

Some tribes carved unusual masks which were used in special ceremonies.

Weapons were also made from the forest. These are war clubs.

And from animals, the forest people made their clothing and ornaments.

A shell necklace. A bear

claw necklace. A deerskin

ornament.

The forest people felt closely related to all things in the natural world.

They felt that everything in the natural world had a spiritual life, and that everything was connected to everything else in a spiritual way.

Who were the forest people? How did they get here?  
Where did they come from?

Many Native Americans believe they've always lived on this continent, since the beginning of time. But most anthropologists have a different view and accept the following theory:

About 30,000 years ago, North America looked much as it does today.

A narrow stretch of ocean separated Asia from this continent.

Then, ice began to advance across the Northern Hemisphere. As it did, sea levels dropped, exposing a land bridge connecting Asia with North America.

Large game animals like bison and mammoth crossed this land bridge, entering the new continent, soon followed by Asian hunters.

There were probably several migrations, over thousands of years, and eventually the people spread throughout North and South America. As the ice retreated and the land bridge became covered by water again.

There were hundreds of tribes, but each can be classified into one of several groups, according to the natural environment in which they lived.

The names of these groups are the Eastern Woodlands, the Plains, the Southwest, the Great Basin, the Plateau, California, and the Northwest Coast.

Each of these groups lived in an environment that was unlike the others.

None of the others lived in an environment quite like this one: the Eastern Woodlands, the land of the forest people.

A land of vast forests, rivers, lakes and streams.

What would it have been like to have lived back then, to have lived like one of the Woodlands tribes, the Ojibwa, in the upper Great Lakes, hundreds of years ago?

### **Little Flower**

That's my brother, Little Bear, coming back from hunting with my father.

Boys get to do all the fun and exciting things. Girls? We do all the work. It's not fair. It's just not fair.

By the way, my name is Wa-Ba-Gonce. It means Little Flower. I hate that name. It's just not me. I mean I would be the best hunter in our clan if they'd only let me, but they won't let me because they say hunting is for boys. It's just not fair. My brothers go hunting almost every day.

They also get to set traps and snares. Here, my dad and brothers are setting a snare.

First, a tree is bent over.

Then, the trigger is set. This has to be set very carefully.

Finally, a noose is placed across an animal trail.

When a small animal runs through the noose, it releases the snare.

This is just a stick, but it could've easily been a rabbit. For larger animals, we might use a pit trap.

Branches are first placed over a pit. And then they are covered with leaves.

My father will then place some bait, in this case, a white fish, directly over the trap.

When an animal, like an opossum or a raccoon tries to get to the bait, it'll fall into the trap.

Trapping is fun, but today is a great day for hunting, and I know several good places, just across the lake. But how do I get there?

Hmm. My father's canoe; I'm sure he wouldn't mind if I borrowed it. In fact, if I came back with a deer, or even a Mukwa, that's what we call a bear, he would be very proud, and I would prove to everyone in our village that I am the best hunter that ever lived.

I remember the time my brother made his first kill. All the people were so excited. They treated him like a hero. And it was just a deer. The way everyone carried on, you would've thought it was a Mukwa.

Today, I will make my first kill, and they will honor me, instead of my brother. And it won't be a deer. It'll be a Mukwa.

It's time for a girl to do some of the exciting and dangerous things. It seems like all we ever do is work, like peeling bark.

Every summer, my mother and I go to the forest to find birch trees that are ready for peeling.

Before the bark is peeled, my mother first makes a tobacco offering to the Great Spirit, Gitchimanidoo.

Gitchimanidoo provides us with all the things our people need, and we must always be thankful.

My mother starts by making a cut in the birch, using a stone knife.

The knife is very sharp, but birch bark is very strong, and my mother usually has to repeat the cut in the same place.

Even as she cuts, you can sometimes hear the bark popping underneath.

When the cut is complete, the bark seems to almost pop off the tree, with just a little bit of help.

When done properly, bark peeling will not kill the birch. This tree will eventually seal itself.

We use large sections of bark like this to cover our wigwams.

Wigwams are made each season, when we move our camp.

Saplings are bent over and tied together with weegoob, that's the inner bark of the basswood tree, and it's very strong. This forms the basic frame of the wigwam.

Cross branches are then added to give the wigwam greater strength. As you might've guessed, women are the ones who put up wigwams.

Since this is a summer wigwam, my mother will unroll a cattail skirt around the bottom. The cattails will allow a little wind to blow through the wigwam, helping to keep it cool.

Finally, birch bark sections are added to the frame, starting just above the skirt.

My mother uses a bone awl to punch holes in the bark. And then she slips in a weegoob strip to tie the bark to the frame. It'll take over 30 sections of bark to completely cover a wigwam.

We also use birch bark to make our baskets and containers. First, a guide is placed over a section of bark.

A burned stick is used to trace the outline.

A stone knife is then used to cut the outline out.

It doesn't look much like a basket yet, but it will.

The basket has to be folded, and holes are punched using a bone awl. A wooden peg is used to keep the flaps together until they can be stitched with weegoob.

A well-made basket like this can be used for many things and might last a lifetime.

Many of our things are made out of birch bark, even this cradle board.

It is said that Gitchimanidoo gave us the birch tree so that we would never do without. But sometimes, Gitchimanidoo does not favor us. We may have poor luck hunting or trapping, or our herbs and medicines are unable to cure the sick. It is then we must seek the help of a spiritual elder.

The elder has special knowledge of the spirit world and calls upon spirit helpers to help him purify the bodies of those who are contaminated.

The elder works very hard, sometimes for days, before he is successful.

The spiritual elder performs other duties as well. When my mother builds a new wigwam, the elder will bless it, and all the people living there, with burning sweet grass. Sweet grass is considered sacred by our people and we use it in many of our ceremonies.

I think I'd better tie up the canoe.

This looks like a good spot. Should be plenty of Mukwa around here.

I was saying how women do most of the work. Another job my mother does is fire-making.

She does this by placing dry grass between two sections of wood, and then inserting a spinning stick into a small bow.

The bow will enable my mother to spin much faster than she could without it.

The spinning causes the wood to heat up. If you've ever rubbed your hands together real fast, you know how rubbing causes heat.

If you spin the stick fast enough and long enough, the wood gets very hot, causing the dry grass to smoke.

Then, at just the right moment, my mother will stop spinning, and blow on the smoking grass, not too hard, and not too little, until a flame appears.

I've seen my mother do this a thousand times and it still amazes me.

After that, it's a simple job of adding twigs and sticks until you have a real fire.

After the fire is made, it's time to cook dinner.

We usually start by boiling some water.

By the way, as long as there's water in the birch basket, it won't burn.

Then, we might add some meat, in this case, deer meat.

To this, we'll add some greens, like wild onions and roots, and one of our favorites, wild rice. This will make a very nice stew.

I told you that men and boys never work, well, hardly ever. They do make tools and weapons, if you can call that work.

This is a fish trap my father is making.

Once fish swim into the trap they can't get out.

Traps are left overnight just a short distance from shore.

Sticks are stuck in the water to direct the fish toward the trap.

In the morning, it's just a simple job of wading out to the trap, opening the door, and collecting fish.

Some are bigger than others.

A simple thing like a bone provides us with another way of catching fish.

After the bone is sharpened, it's tied to another section of bone.

The result is a very effective fish hook.

Another way we fish is with a net. The net is usually strung out at night and fish are pulled in the next morning.

Spearing is another way we catch fish. A spear normally has three points. The two outer points spread apart and then close, to keep the fish on the spear.

Spearing is practically always done at night. A birch bark torch is attached to the front of the canoe.

Fish are attracted to the light. All the spearer has to do is wait for the right moment.

We also have time for games. A favorite boy's game is target practice. It's not only fun, but it teaches boys to become good hunters.

Spear throw is another game that teaches boys to become good hunters. Every once in a while the boys will give me a chance. But I hate to show them up. I'm just about the best spear thrower in our village.

I'm also just about the best at foot racing.

And, as far as double ball, I'm just about the best at this, too.

The idea is to pass the double ball to a teammate, using a throwing stick, and to keep it away from your opponents.

One of my favorite games is lacrosse. The game is played with racquets and a ball. The team that scores the most goals, wins. The boys hate it when we beat them.

I almost forgot to mention, the forest is filled with danger. If I had been captured, I would've been taken prisoner by another tribe.

Just between you and me, I like it just fine in my own village, even if they don't let me do dangerous and exciting things.

### **Narrator**

Little Flower and her family were among the last generations of forest people to live in the old ways.

Today, birch bark canoes seldom paddle these waters, and you no longer find the birch bark lodges that were once so plentiful.

But in the forests, you can still hear the voices of the wind, the water, the animals.

And while many of the old ways may be gone, the heart and spirit of the forest people live on.

Little Flower never got to go night spearing with her father. But some 400 years later, a young girl, who could well be Little Flower's descendant goes spearing almost every spring.